CULTURAL HERITAGE *of* KASHMIRI PANDITS



EDITED BY

S. S. TOSHKHANI AND K. WARIKOO

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S. S. TOSHKHANI
K. WARIKOO



Kashmir is not merely a geo-space, but is the geo-cultural matrix from which thoughts and concepts embedded in the depths of the consciousness of its people have emanated, giving shape to their civilizational ethos. Kashmir has been a mindscape or rather an ideogram representing cultural syndromes whose meanings echoed far beyond its physical borders even in distant lands. The history of Kashmiri Pandits has been synonymous for a large part with the deep core of the values derived from this intimacy between man and nature.

Ancient texts repeatedly call it Kashmir *Mandala*, a name that encodes spatial and temporal locus in terms of a sacred geography. The symbolism that the term signifies encompasses both the geographical meaning of a zone or a land and a cosmic sphere or circle with the presiding deity occupying the central spot. The *mandala* also symbolizes a sanctified cosmic or an ideal city according to Buddhist texts. The taxonomy of Kashmir *Mandala* has geo-political ramifications when one takes into consideration the extended sphere and influence of the Valley outside its territorial frontiers. Occupying a central place in the wonder world of Himalayan culture, Kashmir has contributed its serene vision and deep wisdom to the development of its unique traditions. Prompted by historical factors and geographical location, the people inhabiting this vast zone have been sharing with each other religious beliefs and practices, ritual behaviour and moral attitudes, artistic styles and architectural features, folklore and mythical legends through centuries of cross-regional exchanges and social interactions a process in which the scholastic and artistic proclivities and activities of Kashmiri Pandits have played a pervasive role. Ancient chroniclers have repeatedly referred to the intimate historical and cultural links that existed between Kashmir and Kangra, Chamba, Kullu and Spiti at one end and Taxila, Gandhara and Kabul Valley at the other.

The book presents an overarching study of the significant contributions made by Kashmiri Pandits in core areas of Indian cultural and intellectual endeavours, from aesthetics, poetics, dramatuıgy, historiography, linguistics, literature, folklore, transmission of the doctrines of Mahayana Buddhism, Kashmir Shaivism, mural, architectural and sculptural art. With these narratives on the long odyssey of the Kashmiri Pandits serving as the perspective, the volume presents interesting and insightful inquiries and scholastic analyses into different spheres of this great cultural heritage.

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Cultural Heritage of Kashmiri Pandits

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Preface

Kashmir is not merely a geo-space, but is the geo-cultural matrix from which thoughts and concepts embedded in the depths of the consciousness of its people have emanated, giving shape to their civilizational ethos. The geomorphic features of the oval valley of Kashmir sheltered by the snow–capped Himalayan mountains on three sides and spread along the basin of the ancient river Vitasta have influenced every aspect of the life of Kashmiris. It is the awareness of this geography that is a causal factor in determining their image of themselves and their social and cultural identity. In this sense, it can be said that more than a landscape, Kashmir has been a mindscape or rather an ideogram representing cultural syndromes whose meanings echoed far beyond its physical borders even in distant lands. The history of Kashmiri Pandits has been synonymous for a large part with the deep core of the values derived from this intimacy between man and nature.

This has been underlined by the consecration by the Kashmiri Pandits of their land as an embodiment of Parvati, the daughter of Himalayas, and her divine consort Shiva. Perhaps that is why their ancient texts repeatedly call it Kashmir *Mandala*, a name that encodes spatial and temporal locus in terms of a sacred geography. The symbolism that the term signifies encompasses both the geographical meaning of a zone or a land and a cosmic sphere or circle with the presiding deity occupying the central spot. The *mandala* also symbolizes a sanctified cosmic or an ideal city according to Buddhist texts, having *adhara* or residence and *adheya* or residents as its two parts. In all these connotations the term *mandala* seems to be relevant to Kashmir as the habitat of its original people, the Pandits, also known as *Bhatta*s, whose history has been synonymous with the glories of this land from the earliest times down to this day. It is they whose ingenuity illuminated every aspect of the cultural expression and creative endeavour of the land. The taxonomy of Kashmir *Mandala* has geo-political ramifications when one takes into consideration the extended sphere of authority and influence of the Valley outside its territorial frontiers. Occupying a central place in the wonder

world of Himalayan culture, Kashmir has contributed its serene vision and deep wisdom to the development of its unique traditions. Prompted by historical factors and geographical location, the people inhabiting this vast zone have been sharing with each other religious beliefs and practices, ritual behaviour and moral attitudes, artistic styles and architectural features, folklore and mythical legends through centuries of cross-regional exchanges and social interactions – a process in which the scholastic and artistic proclivities and activities of Kashmiri Pandits have played a pervasive role. Ancient chroniclers have repeatedly referred to the intimate historical and cultural links that existed between Kashmir and Kangra, Chamba, Kullu and Spiti at one end and Taxila, Gandhara and Kabul Valley at the other. With the Karkota dynasty coming to power, the political suzerainty of Kashmir extended to many areas in north India besides Afghanistan and parts of Central Asia. It was indeed a centripetal world with Kashmir and its people, the Pandits, in the centre.

From available literary evidences, Kashmir appears to have been a hub of Vedic civilization, the great Sanskrit grammarian Panini's *Ashtadhyayi* being the first text which makes a direct mention of its name. Patanjali, Panini's famous commentator and celebrated author of the *Yogasutras*, also appears to be well acquainted with the Valley and its people whom he calls *Kashmirikas*. According to some scholars Patanjali himself belonged to Kashmir, which has been identified by Zimmer with the Munjvant region. References to Kashmir can also be found in the *Mahabharata* and a whole host of Puranic literature including the *Matsya, Vayu, Padma, Vishnu* and *Vishnudharmottra* Puranas. The last of these, which gives the name *Vaitastika* or the region of the Vitasta to Kashmir, is believed to have been written in Kashmir itself.

We meet these ancient people in flesh and blood for the first time on the pages of the *Nilamata Purana*, a sixth century Sanskrit text from Kashmir, mixing and co-mingling with other ethnic and social groups to lay the foundations of a lustrous civilization on the banks of the Vitasta, inspired by a commitment to high human values and imbued with a spirit of sublimity. The *Nilamata Purana* which relates the legend of Kashmir's genesis from the waters of the primordial lake called Satisar, gives a picture of the religious and cultural life of the early Kashmiris, the forebearers of the present day Kashmiri Pandits, in vivid detail. It portrays them as "ever sportive and joyful people", living in perfect harmony with their natural environs whose enrapturing beauty they often excelled in thought and spirit. They are shown as liberal-minded and aesthetically sensitive people who celebrated numerous festivals with gay abandon amidst much singing and dancing. A remarkable feature of their social behaviour was the readiness with which they gave their women unrestricted freedom of movement and activity. They loved to frequent gardens where men and women sported freely and adorned each another with flower garlands and enjoyed water sports in which young women were especially enjoined upon to participate. And of course they were piously devoted to their gods who were worshipped in numerous temples and places of pilgrimage

which dotted the entire valley. The early Kashmiris watched dramatic performances offered as gifts to them by theatre groups on special occasions, which in turn were sustained by a caring society. Some of the festivals of these early ancestors of Kashmiri Pandits are celebrated down to this day.

Brahmins no doubt emerge as a dominant and highly respected group of ancient and early medieval Kashmiri society from the accounts given in the *Nilamata Purana, Rajatarangini* and other ancient texts of the period. But the respect they commanded can neither be attributed to their role of performing religious rites and ceremonies nor to any hegemonic status they supposedly enjoyed in the society; it was mainly due to their intellectual proclivities and activities. They have been described as *itihasvidah* or knowers of history and *kalavidah* or connoisseurs of the arts and were supposed to have a good knowledge of the Vedas and *Vedangas*. They were also required to be well grounded in the six schools of philosophy besides astrology and astronomy, medicine, grammar, logic and prosody. The mastery that the ancient Kashmiri Brahmins and their descendants, the present day Kashmiri Pandits, possessed over these and other branches of knowledge was indeed formidable as can be gauged from the sheer volume and range of their literary and intellectual enterprise. It was because of their intellectual prowess and expressive skills that Kashmir enjoyed a world wide reputation as a great centre of Sanskrit learning.

This volume seeks to unfold panoramic vistas of a unique culture which stretches over an immense time span of about five thousand years and yet retains its radiance and vibrancy. Various facets of the culture and heritage of an ancient people known as the Kashmiri Pandits whose ancestors gave Kashmir its very name and creation myth in the early dawns of pre-history, are recorded and analysed here. The book opens with an overarching study of the significant contributions this numerically small but culturally important community has made in core areas of Indian cultural and intellectual enterprises, emphasizing that many of the seminal ideas and concepts that have shaped the Indian mind over the centuries have originated from their creative impulses. Be it the building blocks of Indian aesthetical thinking and philosophy of language, enrichment of Sanskrit literary genres, transmission of the holistic doctrines of Mahayana Buddhism which seek to liberate man from the shackles of karmic bondage, the life-affirmative philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism which offers a unique poetic vision of the relationship between God, Man and the World, perceiving the Ultimate Reality as pure and undivided consciousness that pervades everywhere, marvels of mural, architectural and sculptural art, masterpieces of historiography that present keen insights into men, matters and events of Kashmir's past, enchanting compilation of folk stories of abiding human interest that has become the basic source material of tales for almost all the languages of the world – the innovative creativity of Kashmiri Pandits has vitally impacted the exciting history of Indian art and thought.

Even before the 3rd century BC, when Ashoka made it a part of his empire and founded its capital city Shrinagari, Kashmir had assumed the distinctive profile of a land on which the grace of the Goddesss of Learning had descended. Perhaps that is why, Kanishka chose it for the venue of the fourth World Council he convened in the 1st century AD to review, revise and reinterpret the Buddhist texts to preserve the purity of the canon. The Council produced 30,000 verses of explanatory and expository commentaries, known as the *vibhasha shastras,* which were engraved on copper plates in Sanskrit and not Pali. Kashmir soon became the centre of what came to be known as Sanskrit Buddhism. It was there that the Mahayana and also the Yogachara and Vajrayana schools of Buddhism took shape and flourished. Before the end of the first millennium Kashmiri master teachers, monks and scholars were everywhere in Asia – China, Tibet, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Japan, Java, Korea – spreading the *dhamma*, translating texts, interpreting doctrines. The role played by Kumarajiva, Buddhabahdra Gunavarman, Vimalaksha, Sanghbhuti, Tyagabhadra Punyatrata, Dharmayasha, Kamalashila, Shakyashribhadra, Ratnavajra and many other scholars and monks in this context was most remarkable. Even Naropa and Padmasambhava, the most venerated teachers in Tantric Buddhism, were Kashmiris, according to Tibetan sources. Lama Taranath, the Tibetan historian of Buddhism, refers to these Kashmiri master teachers as "Brahmanas" and "Kashmiri Panditas". Tibet received the script for its language from Kashmir with Thonmi Sambhot, sent by Srong-bsang-gam-po, carrying it with himself to Tibet. The 31-letter script is based on Sharada and Devanagari characters. The role of these Kashmiri scholars was by no means limited to transmission and diffusion of Buddhist ideology alone; they also disseminated the knowledge of Vedas, Sanskrit grammar and literature, medicine, and other subjects and were instrumental in establishing Buddhist and Hindu colonies in Central Asia, besides carrying Indian artistic and architectural influences in these regions.

But more than anything else it was the philosophy of non-dual Shaivism developed by Kashmiri thinkers and popularly known as Kashmir Shaivism that extended the horizons of world philosophical thought. Rooted in Tantric world-view, this philosophical system presents a unique vision of the oneness of God, Man and the World. The core concept of Kashmir Shaivsim is that Shiva is one, pure and indivisible consciousness that manifests itself as the diversity of the phenomenal world through Shiva's cosmic energy, Shakti. Regarding all animate and inanimate entities as manifestations of the universal self and rejecting the otherness of God, Kashmir Shaivism holds the world to be true and celebrates life. It regards the individual soul as a contracted or congealed form of Shiva or unlimited consciousness, a condition that results from limitations imposed by innate ignorance of one's true nature which is none other than Shiva himself. Realization or re-cognition of this true nature of oneself leads one to liberation which is another name of absolute freedom.

At the societal level, Kashmir Shaivism rejects all differences of caste, creed and gender and allows everyone to be initiated into its fold. From Vasugupta, to whom the philosophy was revealed in the 9th century in the form of *Shiva Sutras* - its seminal text, to Somananda, Bhatta Kalatta, Utpaldeva and Abhinavagupta, a line of great masters expounded, interpreted and propagated the doctrines of Kashmir Shaivism down to Swami Lakshmanjoo in our own times. Abhinavagupta, the greatest of them all, gave it a firm epistemological and philosophical foundation and integrated its different schools – *Krama*, *Kula*, *Spanda* and *Pratyabhijna* into one monistic vision, bringing them all under the rubric of Trika. In recent years, scholars across the world have been showing an increasing interest in studying various aspects of its philosophy and praxis. The present volume carries an insightful and illuminating paper by the well known Sanskrit scholar, Dr. Rajnish Mishra on the historical, epistemological, ontological and speculative aspects of Kashmir's Trika Shaivism.

Another closely related school of mystic philosophy that developed within the fold of Tantra, is Shaktism or the Mother Goddess cult which is extremely popular among Kashmiri Hindus since very early times. Worship of Shakti in her manifestations as Sharika, Ragnya, Tripura and Jwala forms the cornerstone of their faith with every Kashmiri Hindu household being oriented towards one or other of these goddesses as its tutelary deity. The core concept of this cult is that the ultimate reality is feminine in essence with the belief having become an integral part of Kashmiri Pandit religious life.

While many elements of the non-dual Shaiva tradition have found their way into the belief and ritual system adopted by Kashmiri Pandits, the dualistic Puranic mode of worship is more widely prevalent at the popular level. The earliest form it took was that of the *Pashupata* cult which appears to have been the mode of worship before Ashoka introduced Buddhism in Kashmir. By the 7th century many Shaiva Tantric and Agamic cults had made their appearance. The dualist *Siddhanta* Shaivism, which has many concepts common with the non-dualist Shaiva system is also said to have had its birth in Kashmir and was prevalent among Kashmiri Hindus in early times. Though Shiva was a popular deity from a very remote period, Vaishnavism also occupied a dominant position with a deep impact on various aspects of the life of Kashmiri Hindus, as indicated by the *Nilamata Purana* and *Vishnudharmottara Purana*. It gained further popularity along with worship of other gods of the Hindu pantheon as Buddhism receded into the background and lost its importance as the dominant faith of the people. The Vaishnava Tantric cult of *Pancharatra* flourished in early Kashmir and according to some scholars had its birth there. It found its expression in art too as is evident from the beautiful images of the four-headed Vishnu of the early medieval period, the four heads representing the four *vyuha* deities of the cult.

The rich intellectual and cultural climate that prevailed in Kashmir fostered and stimulated an amazing level of creativity in different fields of art and expression. The theory of *rasa* propounded by Bharata in his *Natyashastra* in probably the 2nd century BC generated

a lively discussion throughout the country about the relationship between the aesthetic experience and the aesthetic object, with Kashmiri thinkers raising and attempting to resolve the basic issues. In the process some of the most fundamental concepts of Indian aesthetic thinking came into being and crystallized into a cogent theory of artistic expression. Profound thinkers like Bhatta Lolatta, Udbhahtta, Shankuka, Bhatta Nayaka, Rudratta, Ruyyaka, Mahima Bhatta and Bhatta Tauta dominated the debate with their perceptive ideas and arguments, giving it a meaningful direction. One can't but be overwhelmed by the fact that all the schools of Indian aesthetic thought were founded by Kashmiri aesthetes – the *Alamkara* school by Bhamaha, *Riti* school by Vamana, *Vakrokti* school by Kuntaka, *Dhvani* school by Anandavardhana and *Auchitya* and *Camatkara* schools by Kshemendra. It was the brilliant exposition of Bharata's concept of *rasa* by Abhinavagupta that made it a theory integral to all Indian aesthetical thinking along with Anandavardhana's revolutionary concept of *dhvani* or poetic suggestion. Mammata synthesized all the schools while putting a final seal on the supremacy of the *rasa-dhvani* theory. This makes it impossible for anyone to think of Indian aesthetics without the great contribution that Kashmiri Pandit thinkers have made to it.

In the field of creative literature also a whole galaxy of brilliant Sanskrit writers comprised of Kashmiris – Damodaragupta, Jayanta Bhatta, Somadeva, Bilhana, Kalhana, Kshemendra, Mankha, Bhalatta, to name only a few. In fact the earliest literary work in the language that is extant today is Shyamalika's farce *Padataditka*, a *bhana* or one actor play, assigned by scholars to the 4th century. In the 9th century another brilliant play, *Agamadambara* was written by Jayanta Bhatta which instead of following the beaten track of convention deals with abstruse subjects like logic and philosophy but portrays idiosyncrasies of philosophers and founders of various schools and cults at a realistic level. Its interest lies in the way it exposes hypocrisies, pretensions and squabbles of representatives of various contemporary religious sects though it ends on a note of harmony and synthesis.

In the 10th-12th centuries some of the very best Sanskrit writers of Kashmir expressed themselves in narrative, historical and lyrical genres and produced literary masterpieces in what can be called an unusual upsurge of creativity. Based on tales from Gunadhya's lost *Brihatkatha*, Somadeva's *Kathasaritsagara* is the world's largest collection of stories – a source of tales for almost all the languages of the world, a veritable ocean indeed. Bilhana's genius found expression in narrative as well as lyrical poetry. His *Vikramankadeva Charit* "dovetails objective facts of history into imaginative improvisation of court culture", while his *Chaurapanchashika* is an intensely lyrical expression of highly sensuous feelings. Kalhana, with his keen sense of history and sound judgment of men and matters, pioneered the tradition of historiography in India. His tradition was followed by Jonaraja, Shrivara, Prajnyabhatta and Shuka who wrote sequels to his immortal chronicle – the *Rajatarangini*. Kshemendra, a polyglot and literary genius, prolific in output, was the first among the great Sanskrit masters of Kashmir to use satire as a weapon of social criticism. In his

Samayamatrika, *Narmamala*, *Deshopadesha*, *Darpadalana* and other works, he wrote incisively on various manifestations of corruption, economic exploitation, bureaucratic bungling, social injustice, religious hypocrisy and moral depravity that plagued the Kashmiri society of his times, unsparing in his criticism of even the high and the mighty.

Though the earliest evidence of written Kashmiri is provided by the thirty commentative verses on *Chummasampradaya* (11th century AD), an expository work on the tenets of an esoteric school of *Krama* Shaivism and Shitikantha's *Mahanaya Prakasha,* the first authentic voice of Kashmiri poetry can be heard in the *vaakh*s of the iconic poetess Lal Ded. Lal Ded has left a deep and abiding impact on the psyche of the Kashmiri speaking people in a manner that no other poet has. She gave expression to her spiritual anguish in her poignant verses and conveyed the essence of Kashmir Shaivism to the common masses in their own language and idiom, using imagery drawn from daily life with a stunning effect. She also shaped and enriched the Kashmiri language, making it the basis on which a new Kashmiri identity could be forged. As a Bhakti poet she is the most vital presence in Kashmiri literature.

This volume has a chapter devoted entirely to Lal Ded seeking to unravel the mystique of her continuous and powerful hold on the Kashmiri psyche. It tracks the course of her spiritual and poetic journey and to identify the sources of her inspiration and creativity. Describing her verses as a record of her struggles and sufferings and her passage through various phases of her mystic life, the article maintains that her poetic experience can be explained only in terms of the philosophy of non-dual Shaivism. She started her spiritual journey as a tormented soul but attained a stage where self-realization gave her inner strength and the confidence derived from that strength. There is another chapter on Lal Ded included in the volume which presents a new perspective on her poetry and personality. In this paper, the author, Dr. R.L. Bhat expresses the view that though she was spiritually elevated, she was not indifferent to or unaware of the political happenings that overtook Kashmir during her times. Many of her verses have definite political connotations which need to be explored to understand the dimensions of her poetry that may not be necessarily spiritual alone.

Lal Ded was one of the foremost representatives of what can be called "devotional Triadism". Following the precedent of the great Sanskrit Shaiva devotional poets, Utpaldeva and Bhatta Narayana of the 9th century, she initiated the first phase of the Bhakti upsurge in Kashmiri poetry which was totally dedicated to Shiva in a monistic setting, presenting him as impersonal and indeterminate absolute. Apart from Lal Ded or Lalleshwari, who shared her deep mystic insights into reality presented through powerful imagery taken from daily life with the common Kashmiris, there are other fascinating voices also in Kashmiri Bhakti poetry that have unfortunately remained on the periphery of critical attention, some of them remaining totally unheard. There are four papers in this volume that explore the fascinating world of Kashmiri Bhakti poetry or *Lila* poetry as it is more commonly called, for the devotional fervour and spiritual ecstasies it is suffused with as well as the creative idiom and

poetic values that distinguish it. It may be pointed out that the second phase of the Bhakti upsurge in Kashmiri poetry that took place in the 18^{th} -19^{th} century and threw up great *Lila* poets like Paramanand, Prakash Ram Kurigami and Krishnajoo Razdan was inspired by the Vaishnava Bhakti movement of north India. They were a dedicated set of poets for whom Bhakti was not a means to an end but the highest end itself. It was with their arrival on the literary scene with their concept of a personal God who can be adored and loved and to whom prayer can be addressed that the Bhakti movement actually assumed the shape of a distinct trend in Kashmiri literature.

Paramanand, who spearheaded the movement, was a towering literary figure of his time. The paper *Paramanand: Devotional Raptures of Krishna Lila* presents the saint-poet in a refreshingly new perspective, underlining the intense devotional passion that informs his works and the high spiritual values they enshrine. In his major narrative works *Radha Swayamvar* and *Sudama Charit*, he uses the theme of Krishna's divine play to expound by means of allegory a profound philosophy of love that recognizes devotion as the only way to seek the supreme reality. His Radha is a creation of pure beauty and joy, representing the intense longing of the human soul for full identification with God. In *Sudama Charit* he suggests that through dissolution of ego alone can one gain the ability to experience the bliss that comes through God's grace.

Familiarity with the story of Rama existed in Kashmir since very early times as is testified by the numerous references and allusions to the *Ramayana* characters and episodes in Kashmiri oral literature like wedding songs, ballads, sayings, proverbs etc. But in the written form *Prakash Ramayana* or *Ramavatar Charit* by Prakash Ram Kurigami, the only Kashmiri *Ramayana* to have appeared in print, is a work of tremendous popular appeal. The work has obvious allegorical features with the poet asserting at the outset that the story of Rama is a "bridge that takes one across the river of desire". At another place he interprets the story as a struggle between forces of "truth and falsehood". It is an extraordinary *Ramayana* in which Ravana is shown as Sita's father and Sita is shown revolting against Rama towards the end and the local colour is so profuse that the entire story seems to be set in Kashmir. The chapter *The Ramayana Theme in Kashmiri Poetry* evaluates this beautiful work and also throws light on what the other unpublished Ramayanas in the Kashmiri language have to offer to the student of Kashmiri poetry.

Kashmiri Bhakti poetry touches its high watermark in Krishnajoo Razdan, the lilting cadences of whose devotion-suffused poems have a haunting beauty about them . He is without doubt the most musical of all Kashmiri poets, high acoustic values forming the mainstay of his tremendous appeal. Regarding Bhakti as the cultivation of an emotional relationship with God rather than an intellectual response to the existential situation, he directs his devotion towards both Shiva and Krishna, his chosen deities, like the great Maithili poet Vidyapati. His mellifluous songs of Krishna's *rasalila* and the mystic union of Shiva and

Shakti continue to sway thousands of Kashmiri minds to this day, transporting them to great heights of devotional ecstasy. As a Bhakti poet Krishnajoo Razdan correlates belief in a personal God and an impersonal view of the ultimate reality. Placing Bhakti above everything else in life he regards divine grace as an essential pre-condition for experiencing the love of God. While laying stress on *bhava* or feeling, Krishnajoo Razdan does not find any dichotomy between *bhakti* and *jnana*, which he views in conjunction with each other. In fact as a poet he does not take any doctrinaire or sectarian position in respect of *bhakti*. His magnum opus *Shiva Lagna* is replete with images of oneness of Shiva and Krishna and Rama whom he equates with the ineffable absolute Brahma. The core idea that underlies this epic is that the experience of absolute non-duality is itself the highest devotion. Krishnajoo shares many themes with and borrows many images and metaphors from other north Indian Bhakti poets, maintaining strong links with the mainstream of Indian literary tradition and at the same time introducing a high profusion of local colour in his poetry which gives it its peculiar flavour.

Though Rupa Bhawani can not be exactly called a Bhakti poet – she belongs more to the gnostic tradition – her mystic poetry has an importance of its own in the literary history of Kashmir. Unfortunately, there has hardly been any attempt to analyze the distinctive characteristics of her mystic verses which are considerable in volume. This volume carries an insightful appraisal of her poetic work by Prof. Neerja Mattoo in her paper on Rupa Bhawani. Prof. Mattoo refers to what she calls "a brooding intellectuality" that characterizes Rupa Bhawani's poetry and says that "her poetry needs an intellectual response as much as an emotional one".

Kashmir developed its own school of art that acquired distinct features in the 7th-8th centuries under Hasuraja, as Lama Taranath informs us. Although no direct example of Kashmiri painting before the 11th century has survived, characteristic features of the Kashmiri style can be seen in the paintings on the wooden covers of the Gilgit manuscripts. Later in the 11th century, King Yeshe-Od of Tibet commissioned 32 Kashmiri (Pandit) artists through Rinchen-bzang-po to paint murals in 108 Buddhist monasteries including Mangnang in Western Tibet, Alchi in Ladakh, Tabo in Spiti and Tholing and Tsasparang in Guge. Negotiating difficult terrains, Kashmiri Pandit artists took the Kashmiri style to trans-Himalayan region. The murals in Ming Oi in Kucha, and later the frescoes in Tibet and also Dun-Huang in China show that Indian art influences crystallized in this region through artists from Kashmir. In the 14th century Kashmiri pictorial art declined due to political upheaval and in the 17th-19th centuries reappeared in the new form of miniature paintings. Itinerary Kashmiri Pandit painters went to Punjab and other parts of North India to seek work. Fear of religious persecution and lack of patronage forced some of them to migrate to the neighbouring Himalayan princedoms where masters like Seu Raina and his sons Nainsukh and Manaku grafted the Kashmiri style into the Pahari School of paintings. The saga has

been elaborately related by P.N. Kachru in his paper *Kashmiri Pandits – Originators of Pahari- Kangra School of Art.*

An exclusive chapter on Kashmir's contribution to the development of mural art at the Alchi monastery complex by Geetika Kaw Kher is in keeping with the observation of the eminent art historian Pratapaditya Pal that "Alchi is in no way less important than Ajanta" for the history of Indian art. Citing well known and authoritative sources, she contends that there are enough historical, stylistic and epigraphical evidences to prove that "Kashmir valley played a very important role in the stylistic and iconographical development of the murals at Alchi", and proceeds to analyze and interpret these evidences.

Moving from cultural history to political history, the reader of this volume will have a view of the vicissitudes through which the Kashmiri Pandits had to pass from the earliest times to the time of India's independence in a poignant narrative by Prof. Tejnath Dhar. The author describes it as "a tale that has a sound and colourful beginning, a glorious middle and a somewhat sad end". Referring to their present predicament, he observes that their dispersal to various parts of the country following their recent exodus from the valley is leading to a situation in which "they are fast loosing their identifiable cultural markers". The narrative beginning from the account of their legendary past as given in the *Nilamata Purana*, presents a scenario of some significant moments of the early history of the Pandits on the basis of *Rajatarangini* and the four Sanskrit chronicles that followed it. The author talks of the heights the Pandits touched in different periods under benign rulers who showered love and affection on their subjects "keeping them from want and worry, and informing their lives with justice and fairness". We are told about kings of "proven nobility and piety, of virtue and valour" who "raised new towns and cities, built temples and *viharas* for people of different persuasions". Names of Jaluka, Kanishka, Lalitaditya, Avantivarman, Jayasimha flash before our eyes and of female rulers like Yashovati also for their good deeds and noble acts. The upsurge of Buddhism alternating with the ascendancy of the philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism, key role of Kashmiri Hindus in creation of a rich tradition of Sanskrit aesthetics, freedom enjoyed by women and their participation in various social and religious activities, social life enlivened by dance, music and theatrical performances are some of the snippets that may well excite the readers' imagination.

But soon we are brought face to face with the stark side of the story also, the hideous reality that unfolds to shock our sensibilities. The rise of the ambitious and unscrupulous feudal warlords known as Damaras, the internecine wars and court intrigues, the brutal scramble for power, unbridled greed and licentiousness of the ruling clans become the order of the day till the flash point is reached with the depredations of the Turkic-Mongol marauder Dulchu during the reign of King Sahadeva. Then some well known episodes of the sordid drama that starts with the entry of Rinchen, a fugitive from Ladakh, and Shah Mir, an adventurer from Swat, into Kashmir to seek asylum with the king who showers his

munificence upon them, only to be repaid by perfidy, and culminates in the establishment of Muslim rule there by Shah Mir.

It was a long and dark period for the Kashmiri Pandits in which persecution, forced conversion, killings, unfair taxes, desecration and destruction of worship places and discrimination became their lot and they were made to suffer untold atrocities, with Sikander *Butshikan* (the idol breaker), Musa Raina, Shamsuddin Araki, Itiqad Khan, Aurangzeb, Muhatta Khan and the entire array of rapacious Afghan governors being among the worst inquisitors. But there were also periods of remission for them as in the time of enlightened kings like Zainul Abidin and later during the rule of Akbar when Kashmir went into the hands of Mughals. Both Zainul Abidin and Akbar treated them with kindness, allowing them to practice their religion and customs freely and without fear, and rehabilitated them and offered them trusted positions in administration. Akbar repealed punitive taxes like *jaziya* which was earlier reduced by Zainul Abidin.

However, these interludes of relative happiness were brief and in the time of the later Mughals things changed for the worse, touching a low ebb during the reign of Aurangzeb who re-imposed *jaziya* and whose governors adopted tyrranical ways to deal with the Pandits. His coercive policies compelled the Pandits to approach Guru Teg Bahadur for help, but Aurangzeb responded brutally by ordering the Guru's execution. Worst followed during the period of Afghan rule which came to be established when local leaders Muquim Kanth and Zahir Didamari induced Ahmad Shah Abdali to invade Kashmir. The Afghans oppressed all Kashmiris but treated Kashmiri Pandits particularly with utmost cruelty. Yet even in their time some Kashmiri Pandits like Pandit Dila Ram, Pandit Kailash Dhar managed to rise to high positions in the state's administration due to their ability and administrative acumen and they did take several concrete measures to ameliorate the lot of the people. Pandit Nand Ram Tikoo even rose to become the Diwan of Kabul. But so dangerous were the times and so surcharged the atmosphere with religious hatred that Kashmiri Pandit leaders Kailash Dhar, Dila Ram, Hardas Tikoo were all murdered by their respective local rivals and conspirators. Afghans let loose a reign of terror against the Pandits killing them in large numbers, humiliating and imprisoning them and imposing harsh and discriminatory taxes on them. When things reached a head in the times of Mir Hazar Khan and Azim Khan, Pandit Birbal Dhar, a revenue collector and Kashmiri Pandit leader, clandestinely went to meet Maharaja Ranjit Singh and induced him to conquer Kashmir. But when the Sikhs eventually seized control, he did not let them loot and plunder local Muslims. And when Phool Singh wanted to demolish the Shah Hamadan mosque at Srinagar, Birbal Dhar prevented him from doing so.

The Sikhs adopted harsh and repressive measures to remain in control and in the later part of their rule inducted several Kashmiri Pandits in the administration in top posts to bring the economy of the impoverished state on track. But things went out of their control due to

internal dissensions and schisms soon after Ranjit Singh's death. In the emerging situation the British handed over the Jammu and Kashmir State to Gulab Singh, ushering in the Dogra rule in Kashmir.

The Dogra rulers replaced the Pandits with Panjabi Hindus in top echelons of the bureaucracy and with Christian missionaries pouring in, allowed a British Resident to be stationed in Srinagar to overlook administrative affairs. And as modernization was adopted as a state policy and western ways of life were introduced, the Pandits took no time in switching over from acquiring proficiency in Persian to learning English so as to keep pace with the changing times. Their efforts led to the establishment of the Sri Pratap College in Srinagar which enabled them to acquire modern education. As political consciousness dawned among Kashmiris, the Pandits made common cause with Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, weaning him away from sectarian politics, to create the National Conference and join its struggle against autocratic rule in the State. In 1947, when India attained freedom, the Maharaja finally signed the instrument of accession passing on actual power into the hands of Sheikh Abdullah.

The Pandits have the distinction of having been pioneers in India of the art of historiography, the lack of which has been seen for long as the Achilles heel of the country's scholastic traditions. Kalhana, with his deep understanding of human nature and his keen interest in the affairs of the world around him has been widely admired for his *Rajatarangini*, a work of tremendous value for the study of Kashmir history. In his paper on Kashmiri Pandit historiographers, Prof. Mushtaq A. Kaw, hails him for his qualities as a historian which match the ideals of historiography propounded by modern historians and social scientists. Kalhana's methodology consists of drawing on earlier literary and inscriptional sources for information and interpreting this data objectively and taking a wide range of factors from "from climate and geography to polity, economy and society" into consideration for his analysis. The works of the four subsequent Sanskrit historians who followed him, Jonraja, Shrivara, Shuka and Prajyabhatta, have also been analysed for their merits and weakness as historical accounts of the periods they cover. The conclusions are of course the author's own, his suggestion of the last three of them being biased in favor of the community to which they belonged leaving much scope for disagreement. However, in his overall judgment he characterizes their works as "rich sources of historical information". Mushtaq A. Kaw discusses in greater detail the contributions of some latter-day Kashmiri Pandit historians like Nath Pandit, Birbal Kachru and Narain Kaul Ajiz, who wrote their accounts in Persian. Nath Pandit's *Gulshan-i- Dastur,* a relatively lesser known work, is described by him as a "real treasure of historical literature" for his description of the geo-physical features, agriculture, units of weight, as well as economic situation prevailing in Kashmir, particularly during Muslim rule in Kashmir. Nath Pandit, as we are told, gives interesting information in this work about imperial gardens, archeological sites, medieval bazaars, barter system, taxes and levies, land revenue and other

aspects of social and economic life. Though he describes the Afghan rule in Kashmir as the "scourge of God on man", he lauds the rule of Sukhjivan Mal as an exception. Written in 1710 AD, Narain Kaul Ajiz's Persian chronicle *Muntakhabut-al Twarikh* narrates Kashmir's history from early times to late Mughal period, particularly giving details of the agrarian situation and the relations of the state with chieftains of neighboring regions. The author finds Birbal Kachru's *Majumu'at- ul Tawarikh*, which was written in 1835-36, useful for the information it gives about "polity, economy and society", besides historical events, during the reigns of the Sultans, Mughals, Afghans and Sikhs.

How the Kashmiri Pandits are socially structured and what constitutes their cultural identity is an area which socio-anthropologists do not seem to have systematically explored so far. This volume has made an attempt to deal with this subject. Divided into 199 exogamous *gotras*, the Pandits claim to be Saraswat Brahmins. Belonging to the *Kathaka* school of *Krishna Yajurveda*, their *achara* or ritual conduct is governed mainly by the *Laugakshi Grihyasutras*. They have their own distinct way of living characterized by their modes of worship, customs and rituals, festivals, dress and ornaments, food habits, linguistic dialect etc., which set them apart from other communities of Kashmir. What is peculiar about the social organization of the Kashmiri Pandits is that they belong only to the Brahmanical class locally called *Bhatta*s (Sanskrit *bhartri* meaning a learned man), but are superficially divided into two sub-castes respectively designated as *karkun* or civil servants and *gor* or the priestly class. This division was caused by a historical development which took place in the 15th century with Sultan Zainu'l Abidin declaring Persian to be the court language of Kashmir. Those Kashmiri Brahmins who joined court services for their livelihood took to learning Persian and those who were supposed to take care of traditional Sanskrit scholarship and performance of religious rituals and ceremonies came to be called *bhasha bhattas* and later *gor*s.

Though the *bhasha bhattas* or *gor*s were regarded as a respected section of the society in the beginning, they became subsequently economically dependant on the *karkuns* who in a case of perverted social hierarchy "arrogated to themselves the superior status". The *gors* or the priestly class regarded the *karkuns* or the official class as their clients and were paid by the latter *dakshina* or their customary fees for rendering ritual services. But with the recent exodus of the Pandits from Kashmir, all this has changed. Most of the *gor*s have given up their traditional priestly calling and have taken up other professions, the dichotomy between them and the category of *karkuns* having now almost completely disappeared. In fact they had started joining government services and other jobs much earlier as their priestly vocation brought them little else than contempt and humiliation besides meagre economic gains. With priests hardly available for performance of even essential rituals like marriage ceremonies or last rites of the dead, the non-priestly class is facing great inconvenience.

Although the fundamental core of Kashmiri Pandit ritualistic system is the same as that of other north Indian Hindus, there are several variations, modifications and improvisations permitted by *deshachara* or local practices which give Kashmiri Pandit rituals their peculiar flavour. While the Vedic and Tantrik elements predominate, local customs lend colour to their performance. In the present circumstances, however, when the Pandits have been displaced from their homes in Kashmir, and also due to exigencies of modern style of living, only the essential among the sixteen standard Hindu *samskaras* or life cycle rituals are performed by them. These are *mekhal* or sacred thread investiture (*upanayana)* and *nethar* or the wedding ceremony. Performance of post-natal rituals like *shrana sondar* or purification bath, *kahnethar*, which is a blend of *jatakarana* and *namakarana* ceremonies, *zarakasai* or *chudakarana* (*mundan*), the first tonsure of the new born child, is also still not very infrequent. It is the numerous local ceremonies and customs which make performance of these *samskaras* in Kashmiri Pandit households particularly fascinating and colourful. Of these some have been described in some detail in the article on Kashmiri Pandit social structure and cultural identity.

Marriage is regarded as the most important among the life-cycle rituals by Kashmiri Pandits. While socially it is necessary for perpetuation of the family and the race, the Pandits hold the householder's *ashrama* to be the highest *ashrama* because it provides support and succor to the whole society. For them, as for all Hindus, marriage is invariably a monogamous union, the *Brahmadeya* type in which the father "gives away" his daughter before the sacred fire to a suitable man of good character and belonging to respectable family, being prevalent among them. Marrying in the same *gotra* or the same *pinda* is strictly prohibited, though marriage between cognates in the seventh or lower generation is allowed. Widow marriages are generally frowned upon, so are marriages outside caste or community. In recent years, particularly after the exodus, incidence of divorce has increased. Marital status of a woman is indicated by wearing of an ear ornament called *dejihor*, but it is not a kind of *mangalsutra* for women wear it even after their husbands are not alive. There is a still strong prejudice against marital ties with families engaged in certain trades regarded as inferior like that of the baker or tailor or those related to manual work.

Mekhal or *yagnopavit* is the next important *samskara* or life-cycle ritual for a male child, not just because he gets initiated into Brahmanhood by recitation of the *Gayatri* mantra, but also because it is regarded as an essential prerequisite for making him eligible for marriage. At present for most people the trend is to have it performed a few days before marriage, though it is equally common for young boys to be invested with the sacred thread.

Kashmiri Pandit funerary rites are elaborate and long due to infusion of some *Shivakarma* rituals. These consist of pre-cremation, cremation and post cremation obsequies. In today's circumstances they are finding it difficult to get priests proficient in the entire procedure step by step. The mourning for a deceased kin continues for thirteen days, but the

period of impurity (*ashaucha*) ends on the 10th day when the *preta* or the disembodied spirit is supposed to have become a *pitri* or ancestor. The notions of purity (*shaucha*) and impurity (*ashaucha*) and auspicious and un-auspicious are essential features of Kashmiri Pandit ritual behaviour.

The *Nilamata Purana* portrays early Kashmiris as a joyous people given to celebrating numerous festivals. Almost invariably they visited fields and gardens. Many of festivals like *sonth* or heralding the spring, *navreh* or greeting the New Year are celebrated to the present times, as. most of these festivals are linked to the eco-culture of Kashmir Valley. *Shivaratri*, known as *herath* in Kashmir is their greatest festival with its celebration spread over a whole fortnight. The Pandits celebrate their *Shivaratri* on *trayodashi*, one day ahead of the rest of their co-religionists in the country, in accordance with Tantric rituals peculiar to them. It involves worship of Vatuka Bhairava represented by a pitcher full of water in which walnuts are kept to soak. These walnuts are later distributed as *naivedya* or consecrated food. The festival is invariably associated with snow which is dear to Lord Shiva. Other festivals peculiar to Kashmiri Pandits are *Khetsimavas*, on which *khichri* is offered as *bali* to the Yaksha god Kubera, and *Pan* on which the goddess Lakshmi is worshipped along with Ganesha and sweet bread cakes known as *roth* are offered to please her and then distributed among friends and relatives.

The cult of Mother Goddess is deeply entrenched and widespread among Kashmiri Pandits, who popularly worship her in her various manifestations, especially Sharika, Ragnya, Tripura, Jwala and Jyeshtha. Every Pandit family has one of these local goddesses, who are generally identified with Durga, as its tutelary deity. Religious fairs are held on days regarded sacred to them with thousands thronging their temples to offer worship. An essential feature of the celebration of *navreh*, which falls on the *pratipada* or first day of the bright fortnight of the month of *Chaitra*, conciding with the first *navaratra*, was to pay obeisance at Hari Parbat to the goddess Sharika. Another popular goddess is Ragnya or Kshir Bhawani whose temple is located in Tulmul where an annual festival is held on *Jyeshtha Ashtami* or the eighth day of the bright fortnight of *Jyeshtha* (May-June). In spite of their displacement from the Valley, Kashmiri Pandit pilgrims come in thousands to the sacred shrine to express their devotion to their favourite deity on this day, their faith in the goddess overcoming the fear of the terrorists.

Exodus from their native land, whose eco-systems are inextricably linked with their religious beliefs in the shape of places of pilgrimage and worship, has greatly disrupted the religious life of Kashmiri Pandits. Away from their natural geographical and cultural habitat, they are finding it tough to hold on to their social and cultural traditions. Today they continue to celebrate their important festivals, but in a lack-lustre manner, the real joy having fizzled out of them. In fact the cultural loss they have suffered in the aftermath of their being uprooted

from their native soil is tremendous. An obvious example is their loss of language, one of the most important makers of identity.

In spite of all these odds, the displaced Kashmiri Pandits have retained most of the cultural traits generally associated with their character. Endowed with a liberal and forward looking disposition, they remain a people with a natural bent towards intellectual pursuits. With a near hundred per cent literacy to boast of, they still have a high educational profile as they are trying to uphold their reputation for academic excellence which has always been their hall mark. They have also broken the stereotype into which they have been cast, unfairly though, of running after only white-collared jobs. In fact the notion that they are a people who despise all manual work and prefer only to wield the pen is a highly exaggerated one, for Pandits living in rural areas would always cultivate their fields and tend their cattle. Among the urban Pandits too there were many who would work in the factories or take up jobs as electricians, plumbers, mechanics etc.

Even in their present state of dispersal, the Kashmiri Pandits retain the distinctive qualities of their nature and adhere to their traditional values: peacefulness, piety, compassion, hospitality, sobriety, refinement of taste, civility, self-pride and an attraction towards cerebral graces. What greater irony can there be than this that despite having contributed fully towards the sense of ideals and values that are regarded as peculiarly Kashmiri and despite having enriched every aspect of Kashmiri cultural and intellectual life, they have been forced today into an exile that could well mean deracination for them.

We have Prof. Ved Kumari Ghai, an eminent Sanskrit scholar whose outstanding work on the *Nilamata Purana* is of a lasting value, tell us in an evaluative survey in this volume about the tremendous contribution of Kashmir in producing "Sanskrit literature of great merit in the form of *Puranas*, historical poems, court epics, devotional poems, anthologies, dramas, works on poetics and dramaturgy, didactic poems, satirical poems etc." In the category of *Puranas*, she enlightens the reader about the great value that *Nilamata Purana* has as a source of information about the Kashmiri way of life. She also throws valuable light on the contents of the *Vishnudharmottara Purana*, which according to her was written in the southern part of Kashmir in the fifth or sixth century. An encyclopaedic work, the *Purana*, which is more famous for its *chitrasutra* or treatise on pictorial art, deals with a vast number of subjects like mythology, cosmogony, cosmology, astronomy and astrology, omens and portents, polity, sociology, religion, medicine, agriculture, animal husbandry etc. It is divided into three parts of which the first is concerned with mythology, cosmology etc., the second with polity and the third with the performing, plastic and fine arts. Perhaps the third is the most interesting and unique in many ways. From the valuable details it gives about art, music, dancing, acting, painting, iconography, architecture and other arts, it can be regarded as a very important source of Kashmir's cultural history, particularly of its southern part.

According to Prof. Ghai, *Bhallatta Shataka* consisting of one hundred and eight verses in the *anypadesha* or allegorical style is the earliest Sanskrit work in the category of satirical and didactic poetry. Written by Bhallatta who lived in the time of King Shankarvarman (883-902 AD) and was not given any recognition by him, gives vent in his verses indirectly to his feelings of displeasure at this injustice. Describing Kshemendra as the topmost satirist of Sanskrit, the author has a quick critical look at some of his best works that have survived including *Samayamatrika*, *Darpadalana*, *Sevyasevkopadesha*, *Deshopadesha* and *Narmamala* in which he uses biting and incisive satire to describe the hard realities of rural and urban life in the Kashmir of his times. She also gives us an idea of his great genius as expressed in his abstracts of *Ramayana, Mahabharata, Brihatkatha,* and *Kadambari, Bauddha avadanas* and treatises on rhetoric, erotica and prosody. The author then acquaints us with the poetic peculiarities of the *mahakavyas* or court epics written by Kashmiri Sanskrit poets, describing their themes in brief: *Kapphinabhyudaya* of Shivaswamin, *Haravijaya* of Ratnakara, *Ravanarjuniya* of Bhima, *Shrikanthacharita* of Mankha and *Kathakautuka* of Shrivara and *Delaramakathasara* of Rajanaka Bhatta Ahladaka. Kashmir, Prof. Ghai tells us, "ranks the highest as far as historical poems in Sanskrit are concerned", pointing out that "Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* alone is sufficient to challenging the view that Indian writers were devoid of historical sense". Kalhana's keen sense of observation, his understanding of political affairs and catholicity of mind are mentioned by her as qualities of a true historian. Mentioning the continuations of *Rajatarangini* by Jonaraja, Shrivara, Shuka and Prajnyabahtta and other historical poems written by Kashmiri poets in the passing, she then proceeds to describe *Vikramankadevacharita* of Bilhana, the earliest historical poem available, in some detail vouching for its historicity on the basis of epigraphical evidence.

In the field of devotional and hymnal poetry written by Sanskrit poets from Kashmir such great works as *Stutikusumanjali* of Jagadhara, *Srigdhara Stotra* of Sarvajnamitra, *Devinamvilasa* of Sahib Kaul as well as the unpublished *Ratnashataka* by Ratnakantha, hold important place. In drama, Kashmir has produced Shyamalika whose *Padataditaka* is a *bhana* giving vivid description of common life of he people in a lively language, and Jayanta Bhatta whose *Agamadambara* is a four-act philosophical play of a high order describing various cults popular in Kashmir and regarding different philosophical systems as different doors to the same building. There is also a small romantic play *Karnasundari* by Bilhana .

Kashmir's contribution in the field of poetics is unique as all the schools of Indian poetics have originated in Kashmir. The author divides the history of Sanskrit poetics into three stages: in the first stage we have Bharata's *Natyashastra* considering poetics to be a part of dramaturgy, in the second poetics assumes an existence independent of dramaturgy and in the third dramaturgy comes to be regarded under poetics. Defining *kavya* as 'togetherness of word and meaning' (*shabdarthau sahitam kavyam*), Bhamaha established the *alamkara* school in the 8th century, making some very important departures. Kuntaka propounded the

concept of *vakrokti* or oblique utterance in his *Vakroktijivitam* and founded the *vakrokti school*; Vamana came up with his theory of importance of *riti* or style and set up the *riti* school. But the question of what constituted the "soul of poetry" was only settled when Anadavardhana propounded in his great work *Dhvanyaloka* that *dhvani* or suggestion was indeed at the core of poetic experience. His revolutionary theory of *rasadhvani* was further elaborated and put on a firm footing by the great Abhinavagupta in his famous exegetic work *Dhvanyaloka Lochana*. Finally, it was Acharya Mammata who established the supremacy of the *rasadhvani* theory in his famous work *Kavyaprakasha* which 'is a complete manual of poetics" and has 75 commentaries on it.

Shankaracharya, the great Advaita philosopher established the seats of the four *Jagat Gurus* in the places of pilgrimage as symbolic pillars of the directions supporting the spiritual unity of India. These bounding pillars are enclosed by the halo of Kashmir *Mandala*. Did Shankracharya actually visit Kashmir and ascend the *sarvajna pitha* at the holy pilgrimage place of Sharada there? Was he influenced by the existing Tantric lore of Kashmir and did he believe in the cult of Shakti or the Mother Goddess so deeply embedded in Kashmiri minds after his visit? Does this devotion of *Sundarya Lahari*,his enchantingly beautiful hymn in praise of Shakti reflect in any way an impact of Shakta philosophy on his life and thought? These questions assume importance in view of a strong tradition among Kashmiri Pandits that he did indeed come to Kashmir. Rashneek Kher, a young scholar digs deep through written as well as oral evidences to find answers. Inclined to say yes, he is particularly intrigued by the legend that the image of Goddess Shardamba at Shringeri was brought by him from the temple of Sharada at Sharadi in Kashmir which is now a part of Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

This takes us to a fascinating first hand account of the three visits of the famous ancient shrine of Sharada by Prof. A. R. Nazki. According to Prof. Nazki he is the first Indian and Kashmiri on this side of the LOC to have traveled to the sacred pilgrimage place of Sharada in sixty years where he was "face to face with my heritage, with my past, with my roots". It is in an expanded state of mind that he describes the topography, history and architectural features of Sharada, and more than anything else the beauty of his spiritual experience at the holy place in his article *In Search of Roots*. He recalls a similar vision he had earlier at Hari Parbat during his childhood.

The Kashmiri Pandits hold every inch of Kashmir as sacred land, a playground of the gods. As a nature venerating people they see nature as a manifestation of divinity. The *Nilamata Purana* describes the entire valley as the embodiment of Uma. Every mountain peak, every rock, every cave, every lake, every river, every pool has its own legend, its own tale, its own glory. That is why numerous places in Kashmir are invested with religious sanctity by them, with temples and pilgrimage centres dotting it throughout its length and breadth. It is round these sacred spots that the religious life of Kashmir Pandit revolves. In

the capital city Srinagar itself, the Hari Parbat hill basks in the divine halo of Goddess Sharika and on the rocks surrounding it numerous gods and goddesses have taken abode. At the other end the Shankaracharya hill commanding a splendid view of the Dal lake dominates the landscape with an ancient temple dedicated to Shiva atop. A few kilometres away is Kshir Bhawani, the temple of Ma Ragnya, located in the middle of a sacred spring whose water changes colour. Swami Vivekananda visited the shrine twice offering worship and performing *havan* and singing hymns to the glory of the Divine Mother. Then there are temples sacred to Jwala and Tripura and Jyeshtha and Mahakali and the banks of river Vitasta studded with temples with their lofty spirals shining in the air. Kapateshwar, Kapalmochan, Trisandhya, Kulavagshwari, Harmumh, Gangabal, Mattan, Gutam Nag, Vijayeshwar and numerous other *tirthas* and temples offer an assurance to the devotees of divine grace. Guiding the reader through this sacred geography is the chapter entitled *Shrines and Pilgrimage Places of Kashmir.*

There is a separate write up by Prof. K. Warikoo on the holy cave of Amarnath, the most celebrated place of Hindu pilgrimage in Kashmir. It has been a destination of pilgrims from all over the country since times immemorial to have a *darshan* of the unique self made ice *lingam* there. The annual pilgrimage to this holiest of the holy shrines of Kashmir takes place on *Shrawan Purnima* day when devotees pour their heart's devotion to Lord shiva who is believed to have distributed the nectar of immortality to the gods at this very spot on this day. The write–up describes the history of the holy shrine and the picturesque traditional route of the annual Yatra. Swami Vivekananda, who performed the Yatra in 1898, was overwhelmed by the deep and indescribable mystical experience he had on the occasion. There is a separate chapter on Swami Lakshmanjoo, the greatest exponent of Kashmir Shaivism in modern times by Late Jankinath Kaul 'Kamal', who was one of his closest disciples. Swamiji reviewed and rejuvenated the non-dual Shaiva system of Kashmir which was lying dormant for a long time and created awareness about it throughout the world through his exalted teachings and writings. A master of its scholarly as well as oral traditions, Swamiji lived the philosophy he taught. Scholars from all corners of the world came to study its tenets and texts at his feet. For his numerous devotees and disciples Swamiji was Ishwarswaroop - embodiment of Lord Shiva. Prof Kamal presents an intimate yet reverent life sketch of the great master.

Reverence for saints and sages, has been an integral part of Kashmiri Pandit social and religious life. Kashmir has had a long tradition of saints, mostly householders, who have inspired devotion and faith in people's minds and provided them with spiritual solace and succour in the rough and tumble of life.

The mystical tradition of Lal Ded and Rupa Bhawani flowed down to the modern age culminating in the deep spiritual humanism of Master Zinda Kaul. Dina Nath Nadim appeared on the Kashmiri literary scene at the head of the Progressive Movement and soon changed

the entire complexion of Kashmiri poetry, giving it a new idiom and new sensibility and opening up a whole new horizon of possibilities for the Kashmiri language. In an appraisal of his poetry and personality, eminent linguist Prof. B.B. Kachru compares him with "a *deodar* tree in a storm", contextualizing "Nadim and his creativity within the literary renaissance and political turmoil of the Nadimian era". He describes Nadim as "one of the major messengers for initiating a paradigm change in the Kashmiri language and its literary culture". Giving examples from some of what can be called Nadim's "political poems", Prof. Kachru says that his "political activism" during the period following the 1947 Pakistani invasion of Kashmir "is inseparable from his literary creativity". In Prof. Kachru's view Nadim had a multifold impact on his contemporaries and others, characterizing the first impact as thematic shift in Kashmiri literature. The second impact is linguistic shift, for which Prof. Kachru uses the term "vernaculariztion" of language. The third impact is "contexualization of his creativity within the milieu of the people", while the fourth is in his introduction of a wide variety of new genres in Kashmiri poetry. Finally, Prof. Kachru raises issues related to translating Nadim in "languages of wider communication", observing that "Nadim's text has to establish *appropriateness* at multiple levels with reference to the transcreated language and the reader".

It is a sad irony of history that Kashmiri Pandits with such a rich culture and heritage and such glorious contribution in different fields of intellectual and cultural endeavour are today in a state of dispersal and dispossession, despairing that they have lost their moorings in their home of millennia. It is this shared heritage and common bonds of religion, traditions, customs, cultural patterns and traits of character, values and ideals which are captured in its entire sweep in this volume that gives them a distinct sense of identity - an identity they are desperately struggling to protect in face of challenges that appear to be insurmountable today and problems that seem to be intractable. But even as they are trying to come to terms with the new realities of their situation, displacement is corrosively affecting their social and cultural life. This book is rounded up by a concluding chapter, which looks at the history of Kashmiri Pandits in retrospect, analyzes their present predicament and provides the possible solutions to their travails. With these narratives on the long odyssey of the Kashmiri Pandits serving as the perspective, the volume presents interesting and insightful inquiries and scholastic analyses into different spheres of the great cultural heritage of which they claim to be the legatees.

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S.S. Toshkhani
K. Warikoo

CHAPTER 1

Kashmiri Pandits and India's Cultural Traditions

S. S. Toshkhani

Some scholars have described Kashmir as the northernmost outpost of Indian culture. While this description seems to reinforce the importance of Kashmir's place in India's cultural and civilisational history, it does not adequately reflect the actual position. It would certainly be more appropriate to call Kashmir the fountainhead of Indian culture considering that many of the core ideas and concepts that have shaped the Indian mind over the centuries have emanated from this small valley nestled in the lap of the snow-capped Himalayas. There was surely something in the cultural DNA of the Kashmiri Pandits which made them gravitate from the earliest times towards cultivating cerebral graces and set into motion thought processes that determined the intellectual and creative climate of India. Whether it be Mahayana Buddhism or non-dualist Shaiva metaphysics, Tantric ritual and praxis or the psychology of erotics, theory of art and aesthetics or the philosophy of language, communicative role of the Sharada script or enrichment of Sanskrit literary genres, Kashmir's creative innovations in almost all areas of art and thought have been so significant that the history of Indian cultural traditions will ever remain incomplete without taking them into consideration. It is not at all surprising, therefore, that Kashmir became a favoured place for the pan-Indian intellectual community, and also scholars from other countries, to converge and interact on issues related to different disciplines and fields of knowledge. This presentation is a small attempt to focus attention on the contribution of Kashmiri Pandits to cultural and intellectual enterprises in India.

It would be pertinent to point out that Kashmir became a hub of Vedic civilization in the early dawn of pre-history. The famous *Nadi Sukta* or River Hymn of the Rigveda, which refers to *Vitasta* while paying homage to Indian rivers, shows that Kashmir was a part of the habitat of the Vedic people or at least a contact area with which they were familiar. This reference is of particular significance as the etymology of the word *Vitasta* is linked with legend of its birth given in the *Nilamata Purana*, a 6th century text which gives Kashmir's own creation myth. According to the legend, Shiva made a hole as wide as a *Vitasti* or the span of a hand with his trident and from it gushed forth a river which came to be called *Vitasta*, Shiva's consort Uma herself incarnating in its form for the happiness and spiritual salvation of the people of the land. Significantly, the *Vishnudharmottara Purana* gives Kashmir's name as *Vaitastika* or the land of the river *Vitasta*.

That Vedic Aryans were among the earliest settlers in the land of the Vitasta after the Nagas and Pishachas is suggested by the reference in the *Nilamata Purana* to the immigration of Brahmins from Aryadesha. In all probability, they must have migrated to Kashmir from the Saraswati Valley after the legendary river changed its course and finally dried up, there being a strong belief and tradition among Kashmiri Pandits that they are Saraswat Brahmins. The presence in the Kashmiri language of a large number of words of Vedic origin seems to confirm this. It may also be relevant to point out here that Saraswati, both the river and the Goddess, is remembered by the bride and the bridegroom during a Kashmiri Pandit marriage. They recite a hymn from the Vedas towards the end of the wedding ceremony in praise of the river Saraswati on the banks of which was located once the original home of their ancestors. The river, says the hymn, distributes its sweet waters as a mother distributes her wealth to the daughter.

Talking of rituals, it may be noted that the Kashmiri Hindus belong to the Kathaka School of Black Yajurveda and follow the sacraments and ceremonies laid down for its adherents in the *Laugakshi Grihyasutra* or the manual of domestic rituals composed by Laugakshi Muni, also known as the *Kathaka Sutra*. According to Veena Das, the *grihyasutras* were compiled around 500 BC to 200 BC[1] and *Laugakshi*, whose ordainments are still the norm followed by Kashmiri Hindus, so far as their *achara* is concerned, could have well belonged to this period. Agreeing in essence with other *grihyasutras*, Laugakshi's work is replete with Vedic elements.

The earliest text, however, which mentions the name Kashmir directly is the *Ashtadhyayi* of the great Sanskrit grammarian Panini, who lived in the 5th century BC in the neighbouring Shalatur village near Taxila. He also appears to be quite familiar with the people of the land whom he calls *Kashmirikas*. His famous commentator Patanjali, the author of *Mahabhashya* and *Yogasutras*, is regarded by several scholars to have been a Kashmiri. Other early references to Kashmir can be found in the *Mahabharata* in the

Sabhaparava and at other places and in the *Matsya*, *Vayu*, *Padma* and *Vishnu Puranas* besides the *Vishnudharmottara* to which we have referred above. It is the *Nilamata*, a local Purana, however, which is the most valued source of the religious, social and cultural information about ancient Kashmir and its people. Commemorating the mixing and co-mingling in some distant pre-historic past of different racial and ethnic groups like the Vedic Aryans, Nagas, Pishachas etc. who occupied Kashmir as its earliest inhabitants, it throws abundant light on the evolution of their belief and social systems, rituals and customs. From it we come to know that after a long process of assimilation and acculturation, these racial groups merged their individual identities and integrated to form a society which gave birth to a splendid culture on the banks of the *Vitasta* with elements from the Vedic tradition, *Agama* cult worship and several folk-religious beliefs and practices as its basis. The customs and usages that the Naga King Nila is said to have asked them to follow to live in the land of Kashmir were, however, hardly different from the ceremonies and rituals given in other *Puranas*, except a rite or two related to the worship of serpent deities. The Naga cult, it may be noted, was not peculiar to Kashmir alone but was prevalent at many places in the country down to its southernmost end. The scenario in Kashmir in the *Nilamata* age was, in fact, not much different from that described by the well-known historian Dr. Shivaji Singh regarding the integration that took place at the time of the emergence of the Vedic culture in the Saraswati Valley. Dr. Singh writes:

> The historical process at that time had reached a stage in which transition from tribal society to the state society had become a need of the time. Performance of public sacrificial ritual generated a sense of cooperation and unity and Vedic ideology formed the basis for the rise of a social identity that was needed to organize the society at a much larger scale needed for the birth of the earliest civilization of South Asia. Thus the emergence of the Vedic ideology and the social identity that it fostered were both a cause as well as an effect of a historical process.[2]

As for the Kashmiri society of the *Nilamata* era, while the Vedic ideals of *satya, rita, tapas, dharma* etc. continued to guide it and the chants of *Samaveda* still reverberated in the land, the Vedic cult of sacrificial rituals was being replaced by Puranic religious practices like *puja* or worship of images, *vratas* or religious observances, *utsavas* or festivals and *yatras* or pilgrimages. This was precisely what was happening in other parts of India also. The Kashmiri society as described in the *Nilamata Purana* was a liberal and aesthetically conscious society of "ever sportive" people who loved to celebrate numerous festivals amidst much singing and dancing and gave their women unrestricted freedom of movement and activity. The people we meet on the pages of *Nilamata* visited gardens where men and women sported freely and adorned each other with flowers or enjoyed

water sports in which young maidens were especially enjoined upon to participate; they sat through full moon festivals watching the beauty of the moonlit night, watched dramatic performances offered as gifts to them on special occasions by theatre groups who in turn were sustained by a caring society; listened to stories from the *Puranas* and the epics; honoured ladies including sisters and friends' wives with gifts; worshipped their gods devoutly and appeased their demons – in fact, did everything that one can do in a free society. Some of the festivals that added charm and beauty to their lives continue to be celebrated to this day by Kashmiri Hindus, as for instance the *Navahimapatotsava* or the New Snowfall Day.

It was to these people and in this land that Buddhism was introduced by Ashoka sometime in the 3rd century BC, or perhaps it existed there even before his time. It is no surprise that it underwent a sea-change there, emerging in a completely new form that matched the proclivities and spirit of the recipients. According to Buddhist texts, Buddha himself had visited Kashmir and was so impressed by the serene atmosphere there that he thought it to be an ideal place for propagation of the *Dhamma*. But it was only when "Ashoka Piyadassi" made Kashmir a part of his Mauryan empire and built the capital city of Srinagar, that it took firm roots there. Ashoka sent his emissary Majjhantika to the Kashmir – Gandhara region to propagate the faith. Majjhantika had to use his miraculous powers to subdue the local Nagas before he could win them over to the Buddhist way of life, as related in the *Ashokavadana* and the *Mahavamsha*. Thus it was Buddhism and not "Brahminism" which supplanted the Naga cult in Kashmir, though its vestiges continued to survive till the advent of Islam. Ashoka is said to have settled 500 Buddhist *arhats* there and built monasteries for them with all the facilities. He gifted the entire Kashmir valley to the Buddhist Sangha. There is an interesting story about the *arhats*. It is said that these *arhats* belonged to the *Sarvastivada* sect which believed in the reality of *nama* and *rupa* or name and form. Branding them as heretics, Ashoka's religious advisor Moggaliputta Tissa directed that they be drowned in the Ganga. To escape this ordeal by drowning, the 500 *arhats* fled to Kashmir and took shelter on hills and vales there. In his later days, Ashoka felt remorse for it and apologized to them, persuading them to return. But when the *arhats* did not oblige, he built the monasteries for them. It was in this manner that Kashmir became a great stronghold of the *Sarvastivada* school, which eventually paved the way for the emergence of the *Mahayana* school which had a tremendous popular appeal. The people of Kashmir accepted the new creed with tremendous enthusiasm, mastered its tenets and interpreted it in a way that it got imbued with the spirit of devotional theism.

The doctrines of the *Mulasarvastiwada* school, of which Kashmir became the most important centre, soon took Afghanistan, Central Asia, China and Japan by storm with Kashmiri missionaries setting forth in all directions to propagate them. But it was only

after the Kushana King Kanishka lent his imperial support to strengthen the faith that it held a powerful sway over the minds of the people not only in his vast territories but beyond, becoming immensely popular almost as a folk religion. Soon after the fall of the Mauryan empire, Buddhism itself had started to disintegrate, splitting into as many as 18 schools, each presenting conflicting interpretations of the basic teachings of Buddha. Though it received some life-saving oxygen during the intervening rule of the Indo-Greek kings like Menander II (Milinda of the famous work *Milindapanha*) who bestowed his patronage on it in the middle of the 2nd century BC, it became a vigorous force only when Kanishka came to power and nurtured it with great zeal and devotion throughout the length and breadth of his huge empire of which Kashmir was also a part. It is said that in the beginning, he was not an ardent believer in the faith, and was himself quite confused when the monks from whom he received instruction came with different and mutually contradictory explanations of its basic tenets. Seeking advice from the greatly respected Kashmiri scholar Parshva, he decided to convene the Fourth Buddhist Council to reconcile the differences between the dissenting sects and to "review, revise and reinterpret" the Buddhist texts so as to preserve the purity of its canon.

It is important to note that Kanishka chose Kundalavanavihara near Harwan in Kashmir for holding the Council after carefully considering the claims of other possible venues. The Council proved to be a monumental event. Almost the entire galaxy of Buddhist luminaries of the time – Ashavaghosha, Vasubandhu, Vishuddhasimha, Jinamitra, Sugatmitra etc.– took active part in its deliberations with the Kashmirian Vasumitra presiding over it and guiding its proceedings. According to Hieun Tsang's account, 500 *Arhats*, 500 *Bodhisattvas* and 500 *Pandits* attended the Council and produced 300,000 verses of explanatory and expository commentaries on the *Sutta*, *Vinaya* and *Abhidamma* texts known as *vibhasha shastras*. These treatises, it must be pointed out were written in Sanskrit and not in Pali, and so were other Mahayana texts from that time onwards, which made Kashmir famous as a centre of what is known as "Sanskrit Buddhism". These were then sent to the great Sanskrit poet Ashvaghosha for giving them a proper literary shape. Later, it was here, amidst the pine-groves of Kundalavana, that Nagarjuna, one of the greatest and most brilliant Buddhist teachers of all times, propounded the mysteries of *Mahayana* as well as his famous theory of *shunyata* – a concept that, according to some, led to nihilism, though "what it denies is not the existence of the world but our perception of it".

With the emergence of the altruistic doctrine of *Mahayana* as the dominant school in the North with its emphasis on idealism, disinterested love and alleviation of the sufferings of others and its objective of seeking *Nirvana* for every living being, as against the strict monastic discipline of *Theravada* or *Hinayana* which sought salvation for only the individual, the entire complexion of Buddhism changed. In this sense, it can be said

that *Mahayana* was Kashmir's greatest gift to the Buddhist world. Catering to the devotional and spiritual needs of mankind, as a result of the impact of Shaivism, *Mahayana* deified Buddha, giving him a place in the highest heaven from where he descends on the earth to mitigate the sufferings of mankind. It was thus that the concept of divine *Bodhisattvas* or pre-destined Buddha incarnates came into existence together with an entirely new pantheon of gods and goddesses personifying Buddha's qualities and attributes. The process actually started in Kashmir with the *Nilamata Purana* declaring Buddha as an incarnation of Vishnu and ordaining that his birthday should be celebrated with gaiety and reverence for three continuous days.

So deeply was the belief in Buddha's divinity ingrained in the Kashmiri mind that ruler after ruler showed reverence to him by dedicating temples to him along with Shiva or Vishnu. The fact is that both the doctrines not only co-existed cheek by jowl but influenced each other at various levels. The Mahayanists incorporated many of the mythological and metaphysical attributes of Shiva and Durga to Avalokiteshvera and Tara of their pantheon. Similarly, the Buddhist concept of *shunyata* found place in Kashmir Shaiva metaphysics. By the time Hieun Tsang visited Kashmir in 631 AD, Kashmir had already become an important academic and cultural centre of Buddhist studies, attracting scholars from all parts of India and other countries.

Kashmir not only provided the inputs from its masterminds to sustain the new doctrine intellectually, it also launched missionaries and scholars to different lands for its propagation and translation and interpretation of its texts. They went to Afghanistan, Central Asia, China, Korea, Japan, Java and Philippines not only for spreading Buddhism but also for transmission of Indian Culture, art and philosophy. The role that Kumarajiva, Vimalaksha, Sanghabhuti Punyatrata, Dharmayasha, Shakyashribhadra, Kamalshila, Gunavarman and other great minds played in this context is nothing short of glorious.

The most celebrated of these scholars, Kumarajiva the son of a Kashmiri minister Kumarayana and a princess of Kucha in Central Asia, Jiva, was so great a genius that he is regarded as one of the "four suns of Buddhism". His translations of Buddhist texts into Chinese and his commentaries on them were so brilliant that he came to be called "the greatest Indian stylist of Chinese prose". Hearing his great fame, the Chinese emperor Fu-Chien had him virtually abducted in 383 AD when he sent his army to subdue Kucha. At the request of the emperor, he went to the Chinese capital and stayed there till his death in 413 AD to complete his scholarly mission with the help of several other Kashmiri scholars. He translated over one hundred Sanskrit texts, including the famous *Lotus Sutra*, into Chinese, which became extremely popular in Japan. Sangabhuti, Punyatrata, Dharmayasha, Gautamasangha and Vimalaksha were other Kashmiri scholars who achieved glory as a result of their work in China.

But the greatest name after Kumarajiva in the realm of Buddhist scholarship was Gunavarman, a prince of Kashmir who renounced his claim to the throne to propagate the faith. After converting the whole of Java and the neighbouring islands to the *Sarvastivada* school of Buddhist philosophy, he went to China in 431 AD at the request of the emperor who went himself to receive him at Nanking. Gunavarman is said to have not only carried the message of the Buddha with him to these places but also features of Kashmiri architecture – probably the three tier roof of the temple which may have inspired the creation of the pagoda type roof of South Asian shrines.

"Such was Kashmiri reputation", writes Mark S.G. Dyczkowski that it was from here that Tibet originally chose to receive its religion.[3] In fact, Kashmiri scholars and missionaries dominated the religious scene in Tibet for quite long time, translating sacred texts into Tibetan and explaining the subtleties of the faith. In the 9th century when the great persecutor Lang Dharma extirpated the religion, numerous missionaries from Kashmir went there to infuse new life into it. Taranath, Bu-ston and other historians of Buddhism have praised Kashmir profusely for playing an important role in spreading and strengthening the doctrine in Tibet. Among the host of Kashmirian names they mention in this context, Shakya Shribhadra and Ratnavajra stand as the most outstanding. Many works of the Kashmirian scholars have been incorporated in the Tibetan holy book *Tangyur*. Taranath, it may be pointed out, relied for his information to a large extent on the Kashmiri polyglot Kshemendra's *Avadana Kalpalata*.

The role of these great scholars was not limited to making Kashmir one of the most important transmission sources of Buddhist ideology; they were also instrumental in establishing Buddhist and Hindu settlements in Central Asia and other countries. Kashmiri monks and missionaries, traders and travellers were active from very early times on the routes to the north and south of the Taklamakan desert, interacting with people and carrying Indian cultural influences with them. Thus, Kashgar was one of the places where, according to Dr. Lokesh Chandra, the Kashmiri Pandits taught the Vedas due to which it was called Kashi.[4] A number of Kashmiri Pandits, according to him went to Korea, where Tyagabhadra, a Kashmiri, and his disciples were responsible for the selection and founding of the capital city Seoul.

Shaivism or devotion to Shiva existed in Kashmir from very ancient times. But Shaivism in Kashmir and Kashmir Shaivism are not one and the same. The latter is the essence and culmination of non-dualist philosophy of reality that evolved over a long period of time in Kashmir from the Tantric tradition of the *Shaivagamas*, representing a paradigmatic shift from Vedic thought. Though Tantric elements can be traced in the Vedas, the two traditions are based on different ontological foundations and ritual systems. Bringing about a synthesis between different Tantric schools, Kashmir Shaivism came to be regarded as Kashmir's greatest contribution to Indian philosophical thought. Among

the numerous Shaivagamic sects that flourished in Kashmir during the early medieval times, *Kula*, *Krama* and *Trika* were most prominent. It were these schools which integrated themselves into a new non-dualist and idealist school of Shaiva system founded by Vasugupta which came to be known as Kashmir Shaivism. Divided into three main schools, namely *Agama*, *Pratibhijna* and *Spanda*, Kashmir Shaivism turned mainly to the *Bhairavatantras* together with their secret doctrines and practices, ritual consumption of meat and wine as well as ritual sex, for its basic features. Kashmir Shaivite praxis, however, interiorized these *vama marga* (left path) Tantric rituals, elevating them to a level beyond outer ritual and interpreting them within their own non-dualist conceptual framework. There are scholars who consider *Pratibhijna* to be the name of the entire non-dualist Shaiva system of Kashmir, but this is misleading. *Pratibhijna* is the most well reasoned philosophical schools within Kashmir Shaivism, but it alone does not comprise the entire system. "Though it evolved in Kashmir, it spread to north as well as south, west as well to east", says the renowned Shaiva scholar Dr. Navjivan Rastogi.[5] Likewise, in the south and elsewhere, for instance in Maheshvrananda's *Mahartha Manjari*, Trika is held to be synonymous with Kashmir Shaivism, perhaps because Abhinavagupta made it the focal point of his expositions.

Kashmir Shaivism is the aggregate of many view points that developed within the fold of Tantric tradition of Kashmir, most important of them being *Trika*, *Krama*, *Kula*, *Spanda* and *Pratibhijna*. The first three of these together comprise the Agamic constituent of the Kashmir Shaivite system. As far as Trika is concerned, Abhinavagupta regards it as a philosophical school which represents the essence of dualist, dualist-cum-non-dualist and non-dualist traditions (*dvaita, dvaitadvaita, advaita)*. It is also supposed to mean the three triads: *para* or Supreme, *apara* or Non-Supreme and *parapara* or the three powers together. Abhinava's famous commentator Jayaratha describes as *Trika* the triad of non-dualist *agamas* Siddha, Namaka and Malini. There are others who confuse it with the trinities of will, knowledge and action, or the *anava upaya (*the Individual Way), *shakta upaya* (the Energic Way) and *shambhava upaya* (The Shiva or the Divine Way). While the principal scripture of the school is the *Siddhayogeshwari Tantra* which is available today as the *Malinivijayottara Tantra*, it is only through Abhinavagupta's works, *Tantraloka*, *Malinivijayavartika* and *Paratrishika Vivarana* that we know about the main features of this school. Like *Krama* and *Kula*, and related to them, *Trika* is also a Shaivagamic school, whose original sources cannot be traced.

The *Krama* or the Gradation School was founded in Kashmir by Shivananda in the 7th or 8th century AD. According to Jayaratha, its tradition goes further back in time to Nishkriyanandanatha. In his commentary on *Tantraloka*, Jayaratha says that its tradition passed on to Shivananda's three female disciples Keyuravati, Madanika and Kalayanika and from them to Govindaraja, Bhanuka and Eraka.[6] It then developed into two distinct

streams; the first being related to Somananda and the second to Jayaratha. Utpalacharya, Lakshamanagupta, Siddhanatha Pradyumna Bhatta, Utpala Vaishnava, Bhaskara etc. were among its prominent teachers during its evolutionary and creative period. But the contribution of Abhinavagupta and Kshemaraja to it was particularly noteworthy. In the 13th century, Maheshwaranada was its great master, after whom it received a setback till Shivopadhyaya infused it with new life in the 18th century. Although all these masters contributed to its development in good measure, it was Abhinavagupta who gave the Gradation philosophy a tremendous fillip. "Krama", writes Dr. Navjivan Rastogi, "was his first love in philosophy."[7] Abhinava's *Krama Stotra* (Gradation Hymn) and *Kramakeli* (Gradation Frolic) are among the most important works of the *Krama* School. "But for Abhinava's *Kramakeli*", writes Dr. Rastogi, "the early history of the system would have remained the 'pre-history' for the modern student."[8] The *Krama* school is based on the concept of twelve Kalis, twelve wheels of Energy (*shaktichakras*) as "twelve evolutionary stages in the flow of energy". Regarding Kali to be the Ultimate Reality, the school holds that the Ultimate can be realized only though successive stages. In the post-Abhinava period, his successor Kshemaraja became its main interpreter. The school, it must be pointed out, is *Shakti*-oriented, and it is because of its cyclic conception of *Shakti* that the Ultimate Reality is known as 'Chakreshvara'. These cycles follow each other in a regular sequence (*krama*) of metaphysical events and are five in number according to the five acts of Paramashiva with Vyoma-Vameshwari, Khechari, Dikchari, Gochari and Bhuchari as their presiding deities.

The *Kula* or the Familial school has a very important place in the non-dualist system of the Shaivagamas. To emphasize its importance, Abhinavagupta separates *kulaprakriya* from *tantraprakriya* and presents it as the essence of the monistic vision. In this school, the consciousness of an undifferentiated totality of the 'family' or group of categories is predominant. The emphasis is not on dissolution or merger of individual identity but on suffusing it with idea of totality. *Kula* or *Shakti* from which the categories emanate, *akula* or Shiva who transcends the manifested universe and *Kauliki Shakti* or the familial energy, which has the capacity to emanate the cosmic family system from within itself. The practices of this school based on the union of *akula* and *kaulik shakti* are regarded to be of extremely secrete nature and include the consumption of wine and meat and ritual sex. The idea of *ananda* or bliss is of supreme importance and the attainment of the supreme *kula* state through it as the highest objective. The Family System is traced to Machhandanatha as its original propounder who is supposed to have lived in the 5th century. After Machchandanatha, its tradition developed in the South, and from there it spread to Jalandhara where Abhinava's guru Shambhunatha was its main teacher. To learn from him its doctrinal secrets, Abhinavagupta had to travel to Jalandhara, though the tradition existed in Kashmir even before his time. With the schools of Vibration

or *Spanda* and *Pratibhijna* or Recognition, Kashmir Shaivism stepped out of the shadow of Agamaic tradition into the realm of mystic experience and pure speculation which evolved in Kashmir itself. Let us have a look at the main concept of non-dualist Shaivism in the light of these two doctrines. Before that, however, it must be stated that it was Abhinavagupta who brought together the essential elements of all Shaiva schools in his magnum opus the *Tantroloka* under a single exegetical scheme. He interpreted their theological and liturgical aspects in a way that they came to be understood as an inner process of realization. Through his writings, he secured for the ideas and concepts of what came to be known as integral of Kashmir, a firm ontological foundation and built them into a coherent and well reasoned philosophical system. Integrating the non-dualist notions of the *Krama*, *Kula* and *Trika* schools into a monistic vision of reality, Abhinava synthesized them with the philosophical notions of the *Spanda* and *Pratibhijna* schools to give an authentic exposition of their fundamental principles. It must also be noted that Somananda, the author of *Shivadrishti*, Utpaldeva, his son and disciple who wrote the *Ishvarapratibhijna Karika*, and Vasugupta and Kallata Bhatta the authors of the *Shiva Sutras* (said to be a revelation) and *Spandakarika* respectively, triggered the new philosophical movement. Abhinava supported their concepts with his sound arguments and theoretical constructions based on his own experience. Somananda concerned himself with refuting dualistic notions of other Hindu philosophical systems while Utpaldeva built up the *Pratibhijna* doctrine as a critique of the Buddhist doctrine of *anattavada* or non-self, as Dyczkowski points out.[9] Abhinava achieved a sort of synthesis between the two doctrines. This was possible because in Kashmir Shaivism one system could be easily understood and interpreted in terms of other systems.

Viewed in this perspective, Kashmir Shaivism is essentially a philosophy of consciousness. Its core concept is that the Ultimate Reality is one, pure and indivisible consciousness manifesting itself as the phenomenal world. It is all inclusive as nothing exists apart from it. Recognition of one's identity as Shiva or universal consciousness is, according to Kashmir Shaivism, the ultimate experience of enlightenment and thereby of liberation. But though it maintains the one-ness or non-duality of absolute consciousness, it manifests itself as the many, the diversity of the phenomenal world having no existence separate from the absolute. While emphasizing that everything "resides within one absolute consciousness" as it is *"purna"* or full of all things "which are sustained by it within its all embracing, infinite nature", it rejects the idea that the world is unreal as the Vedantists believe. The Absolute Brahman "cannot be the real basis of an unreal projection or illusion", it points out. The universe according to Shaiva perception is real because it is the creation of pure consciousness. Shiva, according to it, is both transcendental (*vishvottirna*) and at the same time immanent in all things (*vishvamaya*). The distinction between duality and non-duality is a creation of *Maya*, not as an illusion but as the

creative energy of Shiva. The Shaivites affirm the reality of the world and of *vyavahara* or the daily experience of life. "If practical life", Abhinavagupta points out "which is useful to all persons at all times, places and conditions were not real, then there would be nothing left which could be said to be real".[10]

This leads as to another important concept of Kashmir Shaivism namely *abhasavada* or the 'theory of appearances'. Everything that appears is, according to this theory, identified with the all inclusive universal consciousness and is an appearance *(abhasa)* of the manifested form of the absolute. Appearances are like the waves of the ocean or like reflections in the mirror, and so cannot be said to have an independent existence. They are semblances but have a real basis. It is in this way that Kashmir Shaiva philosophy chooses to explain the so-called change that transforms the absolute into the phenomenal world. The diverse appearances do not in any way compromise the oneness of the absolute. But though an object may not actually undergo any change, it is perceived differently by diffident perceivers – this accounts for the variety of experience we have.

Shaiva philosophers like Utpaldeva and Abhinavagupta represent Shiva or the absolute as Self-luminous Light *(prakasha)* and its reflective awareness *(vimarsha).* As the vibrant light of universal consciousness shines, it makes all things manifest, unfolding all the categories of existence. But it is not passive but 'a living light' which reflects upon its own nature and forms the substratum of all that is manifested.

According to Kashmiri Shaivites, Being and Becoming form two faces, internal and external, of universal consciousnesses, the transition from one to another being perpetual *(satatodita).* The movement from the inner to the outer creates the world of subjects and objects while its reversal leads to dissolution or withdrawal of the object. Actually, though the absolute, appears to be in a state of constant transformation through its *spanda* or vibration, no movement as such actually takes place. Abhinavagupta describes vibration as 'subtle moment'. Matter, Kashmir Shaivism points out, is a "congealed form of unlimited consciousness." In the words of Abhinavagupta, the universal consciousness has "contracted" and "congealed" to "assume the forms of finite limited human beings".[11] Stressing the basic interconnectedness of things, he considers the recognition of one's true inner nature as Shiva to be the real goal of life.

The non-dualist Shaiva thinkers propound the idea of cosmic union between Shiva and Shakti, the two entities who actually personify two aspects of one and the same indivisible entity. In his *Paratrishika Vivarana*, Abhinava says: "It is impossible to conceive any difference which could separate Shakti form Shiva".[12] In her book *From Early Vedanta to Kashmir Shaivism*, well-known Russian scholar Natalia Isayeva writes: "This union of two universal entities is conceived as constant 'vibration', 'pulsation' or inner 'throb' (*Spanda*, *Sphurptta*), which becomes the foundation for the evolution of the created world".[13]

Kashmir's contribution to Sanskrit literature may have been profuse but most of the writers referred to in literary sources are nothing more than mere names to us as what they wrote is not available today. Of the extant literary works, there are not many departures from the conventional, pedantic and even banal stuff churned by writers of mediocre talent. Yet, with more than a dozen kings, including Jayapida and Harsha, trying a hand at writing verses and quite a number of works displaying purple patches of poetic value, Bilhana is not quite off the mark when he says that poetry in Kashmir grew as luxuriantly as saffron:

Kavyam yebhyah prakritisubhagam nirgatam kumkumancha

Some of the Sanskrit writers of Kashmir have indeed made their mark at the national level and are counted among the most eminent that the language has ever produced. The names of Bilhana, Kalhana, Damodaragupta, Kshemendra, Somadeva and even Jayanta Bhatta fall in this category, their genius having secured for them a high place in the literary history of Sanskrit. Some others like Shivaswami, Bhatabhumaka, Mankha, Utpaldeva, Bhatta Narayana, Shilhana, Ratnakara, Shyamalika etc. also show remarkable flashes of creative talent in narrative verse, lyrical poetry and drama. Among those whose works are lost but who have been recognized by their predecessors and contemporaries as really outstanding, two names merit special mention, Chandra and Bhartrimentha. Chandra or Mahakavi Chandra as Kalhana prefers to call him, seems to have been an accomplished playwright whose plays drew large and appreciative audiences. It is quite significant that apart from Kalhana, Abhinavagupta also recognizes the worth of this 4th century writer.

Another great poet who is regarded as a rare genius by literary critics like Kshemendra was Mentha or Bhartrimentha whose stray verses have been preserved by anthologists like Vallabhadeva. He wrote a *Mahakavya-Hayagrivavadha*, which won considerable critical acclaim in his time, his patron Matrigupta, himself a poet, being among those who admired his poetic talent.

The earliest Sanskrit work written in Kashmiri is of course Shyamilaka's *Padataditaka* which T. Burrow has assigned to the end of the 4th or early 5th century. According to Dr. Ved Ghai, since his name has been mentioned by Abhinavagupta, Kshemendra and some anthologists, Shyamilaka could well have been a Kashmiri.[14] Shyamilaka's *Padataditaka* is a *bhana* or a dramatic work in which a single actor narrates the events. The work depicts the life of that section of society which hovered around courtesans and was a part of their milieu. Farcical in style, it has for its theme the miseries of a voluptuary on whose head a courtesan accidentally places her foot. Written in a crisp, conversational style, *Padataditaka* draws a lively, realistic sketch of the courtesans' life and the world around them.

One of the most eminent Sanskrit poets of medieval Kashmir was Damodaragupta, whose *Kuttanimatam kavya* reflects contemporary life in a realistic though delightful manner. He was the chief councillor of King Jayapida (779-813 AD), a great patron of learning and the arts. As though taking a cue from Shyamilaka's *Padataditaka*, Damodaragupta has for his theme "vivid exposition of the trickeries of whoredom by an experienced bawd to a young hetaira."[15] The work, which has over 1,000 verses, gained great popularity after it was composed and was extensively quoted, showing the high esteem in which the poet was held in literary circles. Though erotics was its subject, the poem had great poetic value due to skilled use of language and charming figures of speech. Damodargupta's method of story telling was also new and impressive and its four principal characters Sundersena, Haralata, prince Samarabhata and others were depicted vividly, using devices which gave movement to the story. But more than anything else, the poet's depiction of various important aspects of contemporary Indian society enhanced its value and popularity. Writes Prof. P.N. Pushp: "... *Kuttanimatam* effectively leavens pornography with realistic touches of wit and satire, and appropriately depicts the milieu in which the erotic adventures are periscoped."[16]

In the sphere of dramatic literature, Jayantabhatta's *Agamadambara* is a work of considerable literary merit. Written in the time of Avantivarma's son Shankarvarma (883-902 AD), it deals with an abstruse subject like logic and philosophy in a very absorbing manner. Although *Agamadambara* is a philosophical play, Jayantabhatta does not use the device of personifying abstract ideas but portrays idiosyncrasies of philosophical thinkers belonging to various schools at a realistic level. The work is a departure from the conventional drama, in as much as it does not have any definite hero or heroine or a clear-cut plot. The way Jayantabhatta shows abstruse intellectual discussions taking place in interesting and at times comic and ironic situations points to his brilliance as a playwright. He exposes the hypocrisy and pretensions of those who claim to be followers of various religious sets. He spares none and tries to awaken the spirit of religious harmony at the end. Doctrines of different philosophical schools have been presented in the play quite interestingly through dialogues.

Bilhana, one of the greatest names in Sanskrit literature, left his native place in Kashmir during the reign of King Anantadeva and went to Kalyana in Karnataka where he became the *vidyapati* at the court of the Chalukyan King Vikramaditya Tribhuvanamalla. His genius found expression in historical *mahakavya*, a genre with which he was the first to experiment, as well as lyrical poetry. Dealing with the loves and conquests of his patron, his *Vikramankadevacharitam* is a court epic with a difference. Though it falls short of a historical document as such, it "dovetails objective facts of history into imaginative improvisation of court culture."[17] The work also shows Bilhana's extraordinary command over diction, of which he is himself aware characterizing it as "a cloudless

shower of ambrosia for ears". His descriptions of places and events, men and manners are greatly appealing and charming. Thus his descriptions of his native village Khonamusha (Khonamuh) and of his native land in general and also of his trip through various parts of India are greatly beautiful, yet devoid of sentimentality.

Bilhana's *Chaurapanchashika* is a work of enchanting lyrical beauty and elegance. It tells the story of his own tender romance with a princess which flowered when he was entrusted with the responsibility of teaching her. Their secret love ended in a near tragedy when he was sentenced to death for his 'irresponsible' conduct. When he was asked to take the name of God before execution, he recited intensely 50 lyrical verses of moving pathos reiterating his passion for the young princess and recalling the sweet moments he had spent with her. Touched deeply, she offered to give up her life too but the execution was stayed. *Chaurpanchashika* with 56 verses in its Kashmiri version, leaves a deep impact on the reader's mind being a highly sensuous and hauntingly melodious lyrical work.

Among those who have contributed most significantly to Sanskrit literature in Kashmir, Kshemendra is without any doubt a colossal figure. A versatile genius, he wrote more than 30 works on a variety of subjects. But as a satirist, he has virtually no equal. In fact, he is the first among the great masters of Sanskrit literature who used satire as an effective weapon to expose unscrupulous and hypocritical behaviour of people – and he is fully aware of its power. In works like *Deshopadesha*, *Narmamala*, *Kalavilasa*, *Darpadalana*, *Samayamatrika* and *Sevya-Sevakopadesha*, he has made his intentions in this respect amply clear. Ridicule, he says, in the opening verse of *Deshopadesha*, is a deterrent to prevent one from taking to evil ways. Kshemendra had a sharp sense of social incongruities and an uncanny ability to see through sham and pretence. He also had the courage and conviction to unmask fraudulent and scandalous behaviour of those wielding political, social or religious power. In his half a dozen works named above, he has made unsparing criticism of social injustice, economic exploitation, religious hypocrisy and moral turpitude. There was no aspect of contemporary life which eluded his keen observation, whether it be tyranny of state officials, moral depravity of bawds and voluptuaries, religious superstition, bureaucratic bungling or traders' trickeries. His satire is sharp and incisive and becomes all the more devastating because of his penetrating wit and sarcasm. He does not hesitate to caricature and even lampoon anyone who offends his sense of justice and propriety.

Kshemendra never fails to have a dig at those who indulge in unscrupulous exploitation and unabashed corruption. *Kayasthas* or state officials come in for some of his most severe criticism. He mauls them with his sharp and relentless attacks for their indulgence in forgery, misappropriation and embezzlement. He calls them "birch-bark-bannered messengers of death", "devilish experts in counting and discounting who with a stroke

of their pen turned plus into minus". Yet he does not restrict his barbs for bureaucrats alone, he does not spare even those in the seat of power who think nothing of making the life of ordinary people miserable by their greed and gross selfishness: Kshemendra writes:

> *Khalena dhanamattena nichena prabhavishnuna*
> *Pishutena padasthena ha praje kva gamishyasi*[18]
> ['Ah populace, where will you go
> when the mean, petty and ambitious backbiter
> mad after much wealth
> has occupied the seat of power!']

If Kshemendra stuns with his devastating social satire, exposing exploitative and oppressive forces and sparing not even the high and mighty, Somadeva lulls with his gentle craft of story-telling which had a long tradition in Kashmir. His *Kathasaritsagara* or the *Ocean of Streams of Stories* is the world's largest and most wonderful collection of tales told in a lucid and pleasing style. Kshemendra too had tried to capture the spirit of Gunadya's lost *Brihatkatha* in his *Brihatkathamanjari*, but not with as much success. Though based completely on the *Brihatkatha*, Somadeva's *Kathasaritsagara* is far from literal translation. "I have compiled the essence of the *Brihatkatha*", he says, explaining the nature and purpose of his work. At the outset, he makes it clear that his main concern is to facilitate comprehension of "the tangled web of narrative" rather than "display of literary sophistication". Somadeva, it is said, narrated these tales to Queen Suryamati of Kashmir when she was in a state of deep depression because of the conflict between her son Kalasha and her husband King Anatadeva. They must have soothed her tense nerves somewhat, though tragedy finally overtook her.

Kathasaritsagara seems to justify its name for it is indeed like the vast expanse of an ocean with its over 24,000 verses comprising 18 *lambakas* and 15 *tarangas*. It shows its author's amazing knowledge of the geography of not only India but also of the neighbouring Nicobar, Anadamans and even Borneo islands, and of the mores and manners of different people. We learn from it that caste in India was not after all so cast in iron as it is made out to be for we see in these tales, people belonging to the so-called upper castes were freely mixing and mingling with the people of lower caste, and even intermarrying without any inhibition. The tales show birds and beasts and giants and ghouls merrily co-existing with the humans. As Prof. P.N. Pushp has observed, "we have in the *Kathasaritsagara* adventurous lovers, ambitious traders, intriguing wives, scheming step-mothers, callous brothers, guileful bawds, succumbing simpletons, exploiting self-seekers, considerate profligates, stubborn beauties covering wide cross-sections of human behaviour and social panorama."[19] Weaving story out of story, Somadeva effortlessly

succeeds in sustaining interest. Today the *Kathasaritsagara* has replaced the *Brihatkatha* as the basic source-material of tales for almost all the languages of the world.

Kalhana was India's first historian and carried the art of narration to great heights in his *Rajatarangini*. The same can be said about his successors Jonaraja, Shrivara, Prajnyabhatta and Shuka, despite the flashes of poetic imagination they show. It was in the works of Jayanta Bhatta, Damodaragupta, Bilhana and Somadeva that Kashmiri Pandits made their most significant contribution to Sanskrit literature.

As for Kashmiri literature, the *Bhakti* tradition found its most poignant expression in Lal Ded and Krishna Joo Razdan who have influenced the Kashmiri psyche to its innermost depths. Both the saint-poets are quintessentially Kashmiri, the fusion of the saint and the poet in them accounting for their pervasive and continuous appeal. Translating her spiritual experience into soul stirring poetry, Lal Ded presents in her *Vaakhs* a "saint's vision of poetry and a poet's vision of spirituality", to borrow the words of Dileep Chitre. No Kashmiri poet has been able to scale the poetic heights she attained or reach the mystic depths into which her poetry takes us. While her mysticism has its precedents in the Sanskrit verses of Utpaladeva and Bhattanarayana, it is her existential anguish and her deep understanding of the human condition that make her so great. Krishna Joo Razdan remains unsurpassed for his extraordinary sense of acoustic values and his ability to discover the inner music of Kashmiri words. Unlike Lal Ded, Krishna Joo Razdan does not intellectualize *Bhakti* but believes in establishing an emotional relationship with God as the only means to grasp the Ultimate Reality.

Kashmiri Pandits, however, seem to have been more inclined towards critical than creative literature. Can anyone think of Indian aesthetical thought without the tremendous contribution that Kashmir has made to its development? Yet how many know that the very word *sahitya* for literature was coined by the Kashmiri aesthete Kuntaka from another Kashmiri theoretician Bhamaha's concept of *sauhitya,* meaning the 'togetherness' of the word and meaning – or should we say the word and its world. It is this intimacy of relationship between the word and the world of meanings that forms the basis of all subsequent definitions of literature in India. The fact is that almost all the building blocks of Indian philosophy of aesthetics were provided by a succession of brilliant Kashmiri thinkers. Thus it was Bhamaha who founded the *Alamkara* school of Sanskrit poetics, Vamana the *Riti* school, Kuntaka the *Vakrokti* school and Kshemendra the *Auchitya* school. As for the concept of *Rasa*, though it was evolved by Bharata in his *Natyashastra* it was only its brilliant exposition by Abhinavagupta in his commentary on it, the *Abhinavabharati* that made it a theory integral to all Indian aesthetic thinking together with the revolutionary concept of *dhvani* or poetic suggestion propounded by Anandavardhana. Today the *Rasa-Dhvani* theory is regarded as the ultimate word so far as Indian aesthetics is concerned. Indeed we can say with Krishna Chaitanya that the

inquiry into the nature of the aesthetic experience and its relation with the aesthetic object by such masterminds from Kashmir such as Bhatta Nayaka, Lollata, Bhamaha Udbhata, Kuntaka, Anandavardhana and, the greatest of them all, Abhinavagupta "soared into the philosophy risen from the world of poetry to a poetic world-view". Abhinava, writes Prof. Dayakrishna, raised the question of the ontological status of an art object and raises the pertinent question whether it can be regarded as a perceptual object at all even though it is apprehended by the senses.[20] And in this, Abhinava is fully supported by Mammata. Bhamaha and other theoreticians freed Indian aesthetics from its total dependence on dramaturgy that Bharata's *Natyashastra* led to, and gave independence and autonomy to poetry as an art form. Instead of analyzing the creative process in terms of the dramatic mode alone, they shifted the discussion to the philosophy of language drawing attention to the importance of comprehending the "exact relation of the meaning" to language. Abhinavagupta "used the structure of the Sanskrit language as a calculus to explain divine creativity", to put it in the words of Dr. Paul Miller-Ortega, the author of *The Triadic Heart of Shiva*. He identified the divine consciousness with the Supreme Word or *Param Vak*, regarding each letter or word as "derived from and ultimately inseparable from this consciousness" which forms the basis of his philosophy of language. But that is an entirely different subject needing detailed and independent discussion.

It would be quite logical to move from aesthetics to art, the Kashmiri tradition in this area being long and glorious. But before we say something about that, we will describe the *Vishnudharmottara Purana*. If it is true that this *Purana* was written in Kashmir or somewhere in its immediate vicinity, as most probably is the case, then Kashmir has the distinction of having produced one of the oldest and most important treatises on art in India. To put it in the words of art historian C. Shivaramamurti, "The *Chitrasutra* of the *Vishnudharmottara* has the most valuable material on the classifications of pictures, painting materials, merits and defects in painting as well as practical hints very useful to painters. It also covers subjects like dance, music, architecture, sculpture etc. and lays a great stress on the close relationships between these arts".[21] One of its most significant features is the description of the three types of shading, or *vartana* as it calls it, *patraja, raikhika* and *binduja* – something that is supposed to have come from the West with ancient India knowing nothing of it. It also shows how highly evolved was art criticism in the country in those early times.

The story of art in Kashmir opens with the pre-historic rock drawings discovered at Burzahom depicting a hunting scene. A subsequent development is represented by masterpieces of art in the shape of Harwan tiles and Ushkar terracotta figurines. From the 7th-8th centuries, the Kashmir school of art acquired distinct features even as it absorbed Gandharan, Greek and Gupta influences, reaching the pinnacle of its glory in the times

of Lalitaditya. The movement sustained till the 11th-12th centuries when its fame spread throughout the trans-Himalayan region.

Although no direct example of Kashmiri painting of this period has survived, some characteristic features of the early Kashmiri style can be seen in the paintings of *Bodhisattvas* on the wooden covers of the Gilgit manuscripts, assignable, perhaps, to the 7th-8th century. Lama Taranath, the well-known Tibetan historian of Buddhism in India, tells us that Hasuraya founded a distinct school of painting and sculpture called the Kashmir school. The paintings of this school appear to be pictorial translation of the exquisite Kashmiri bronzes.

From Tibetan accounts, again we come to know that King Yeshes Od commissioned 32 Kashmiri Pandit artists through the great Tibetan scholar, Rinchen Bzangpo to construct and paint murals in 108 Buddhist monasteries in Mang, Nang in Western Tibet, Alchi in Ladakh, Tabo in Spiti and Tholing, Tsasparang etc. in Guge. These murals present a successive stage of development of the Kashmir style when Kashmiri artists and sculptors negotiated difficult terrains to take the Kashmiri style to trans-Himalayan regions. In fact, Indian art influences crystallized in Central Asia and even China through artists from Kashmir. The murals in Ming Oi in Kucha and later the frescoes in Tibet and also in Dun-Huang in China, besides the manuscript paintings in Tabo are some of the best known examples of Kashmiri art in this region. Yet another example is from Dandan Oiliq (in Chinese Turkestan now called Xinjiang region of China) where the mural painting of a young woman, probably the Goddess of Dawn, rising from a lotus pool after her bath, with a small boy close to her displaying the influence of Ajanta, was perhaps painted by Kashmiri artists. About the murals of Alchi, eminent art historian Pratapaditya Paul writes: "For the history of Indian painting, Alchi is in no way any less important than Ajanta".[22]

The artistic tradition of Kashmir, however, received a setback in the 14th century due to political upheaval. Later, lack of patronage and fear of religious persecution forced master-artists of Kashmir to migrate to the Himachal princedoms where the Kashmiri style was grafted into the Pahari-Kangra school. Despite large scale vandalism and destruction in the subsequent centuries, the school of Kashmiri miniature painting survived in the 18th and 19th centuries down to the early decades of the 20th century.

So far as sculptural art is concerned, the Gandhara school patronized by the Kushanas is believed to have exercised a considerable influence on Kashmir. Unfortunately, no examples of early Kushana art in Kashmir have survived despite the fact that Kanishka and his successors built several towns there. Only Uskhar yielded a rich harvest of splendid terracotta heads and figurines, but these betray quite a strong influence of Gupta baroque art. Of stone sculptures, the number of surviving examples before the 6th century is very small. But we know that artistic activity touched unprecedented heights during the

rule of Karkota and Utpala dynasties. Some of the best known examples of Kashmiri stone sculptures are the six-armed Kartikeya of the pre-Karkota period from Bijbehara, the splendid image of Vaikuntha Vishnu and a four-armed Durga also from the same school. From Pandrethan, we have the beautiful but badly damaged figure of the dancing Mother Goddess, the four-armed Ganesha with lions as his vehicle instead of the mouse – a typical Kashmiri trait – the life size image of Chamunda and from Baramulla the majestic giant-sized bust of the three-headed Maheshwara. There are also the splendid Buddha sculptures, including the standing Buddha Padmapani, the seated Bodhisattvas, Lokeshwaras and other Buddha images. Then there are the exquisite bronzes and ivories of Kashmir, marvels of sculptural art, so effusively described by Pratapaditya Pal. Some of the beautiful Kashmir bronzes, especially images of Avalokiteshwara which found their way into Tibet and Central Asia – probably taken there by Kashmiri missionaries or merchants. Avalokiteshwara is believed by Buddhists to be a remover of obstacles and troubles and merchants and traders carried his images with their merchandise through perilous and treacherous terrain to ensure safety.

During the reign of Lalitaditya, Kashmir developed its own idiom in sculptural as well as architectural art. It was characterized by beauty, vitality and grandeur and animated by typical Kashmiri sensibility. It was an art that "gave the impression of greatness and grandeur", finding its finest expression in the colossal Sun Temple of Martand. The equally splendid Avantishawara and Avantiswami temples built by Avantivarman at Avantipura are also examples of the glories achieved by Kashmiri temple architecture.

As in other parts of northwestern India, *Brahmi* and *Kharoshthi* were in extensive use in the ancient times in Kashmir. But of *Kharoshthi* we see nothing after the fourth century and from *Brahmi* the regional alphabets started evolving and taking a distinct shape around the 7th century. One of these was *Sharada*, which was named after Sharada Desha or Sharada Mandala, an alternative name of Kashmir since very early times. "An alphabet of Kashmir par excellence", as the well-known epigraphist Dr. B. K. Deambi calls it, *Sharada* came to be extensively used in a vast region including Gilgit, Chilas, Himachal Pradesh, Afghanistan and even Central Asia as a "vital medium of transmission of ideas, knowledge and culture". It was also used for inscriptional and numismatic purposes. Everything that the Kashmiris wrote – their sacred lore, works of literature, grammar, poetics, medicine, astrology and philosophy written in Sanskrit are in *Sharada*, so are quite a good number of early literary works in Kashmiri, like the *Mahanaya Prakash*, *Banasurakatha*, *Sukhadukha Charit*, Rupabhavani's *Nirvanashlokistava* etc. It was in *Sharada* that Rajanaka Bhaskara recorded the *vaakhs* of Lal Ded while the verses of Sheikh Nur-ud-Din too are said to have been put into writing by Kita Pandit in this very script. Interestingly, one of earliest works found in *Sharada*, the *Bashkali* manuscripts, is on mathematics.

In their book *Archaeology of Afghanistan*, F.R. Allchin and N. Hammond show that *Sharada* was current in Afghanistan in the 6th or 7th century. The evidence they provide is in the shape of two inscriptions that throw light on the development of Northern Brahmi into an early version of *Sharada*. One of these inscriptions is from Gardez, in which two lines are engraved in *Sharada* on the base of a marble image of Ganesha. The second inscription is on the pedestal of the marble image of Uma-Maheshwara discovered in Tapa-Sikander. A clay tablet has also been found in Gudas-i-Ahangaran in Afghanistan with an inscription in *Sharada*. It is now known that the Hindu Shahi kings of Kabul used it for their coinage from 750 AD to 1000 AD. Most of these coins are of silver and have an obverse legend in *Sharada* script. So popular had *Sharada* become in the region that even Mahmud Ghaznavi was obliged to use the script for writing the legends on the coins issued by him.

In Kashmir, *Sharada* continued to be used for a long time after Persian was made the official language even by Muslims with *lagna chirikas* or marriage contracts *hundis* etc. written in it. Some 15th and 16th century tombs in Kashmir have epitaphs written in Sharada along with the Perso-Arabic script.

It is important to note that for his critical edition of the *Mahabharata*, Dr. Sukhathankara of the Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, Pune relied heavily on two Kashmiri rescensions written in the *Sharada* script. Similarly, the critical edition of the Sanskrit classic *Shakuntala* by Kalidasa is based mainly on *Sharada* rescensions from Kashmir. *Sharada* is also the mother of several scripts, the Gurmukhi script of Punjabi and Takri being derived from it. From Tibetan sources, we learn that King Yeshes Od of Tibet sent the famous scholar Thonmi Sambhot to Kashmir for devising a script for the Tibetan language. The Pandits of Kashmir obliged him by evolving an alphabet of 31 letters based on *Sharada*. So overjoyed was King Yeshes-Od, who was strolling in his garden with his Queen Ruru when Thonmi arrived with the script that he immediately had a hymn to Avalokiteshwara inscribed in it.

The script has made the life of the Japanese people also beautiful. According to Dr. Lokesh Chandra, a festival is held in Japan even today in which priests sit in a particular yogic posture and write *bija mantras* in the Siddham script, an older form of *Sharada*.[23] They come attired in special dresses for the festival and use the entire ink in writing the *aksharas* in one sitting, for the ink cannot be used again. The *Sharada* script may have become obsolete today for reasons other than academic, but its importance for deciphering the manuscript wealth of Kashmir has not become any less.

Though this is an outline of various aspects of Kashmiri Pandits' immense contribution to the development of the cultural traditions in India, it remains a largely uncharted area even now. One hopes that scholars will focus their attention on a serious and systematic exploration of what Kashmir means in the Indian cultural context.

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CHAPTER 2

Kashmiri Pandits through History

From the Early Times to 1947

Tej N. Dhar

The history of Kashmiri Pandits is almost like a tale that has a sound and colourful beginning, a glorious middle, and a somewhat sad end. It is not that they have ceased to exist, or are likely to become extinct, because communities do not generally suffer physical death, unless through some natural disaster they lose their essential character. The recent exodus of Pandits from the Valley has been of such massive proportions, and their dispersal into the various parts of India so quick, that they are fast losing their identifiable cultural markers and are getting absorbed into social groups that are different from them.

In the past, their living within the confines of the landlocked Valley of Kashmir had ensured their continued existence as an identifiable community, even when it suffered severe jolts from time to time. But their present exodus is of a different character; it has posed a serious threat to their cultural moorings. This is a matter of concern for all the Pandits, and perhaps for reflection, too.

Writing about the community of Kashmiri Pandits through history requires a long narrative, which is not possible within the short space that the format of the current volume permits. So I shall confine myself to its broad contours: to show how it took root and to chart its significant moments through time, right up to the year of India's independence. The expectation here is that it will stimulate further inquiry and thinking,

for which the members of the community have been known right from its early days, and inspire them to overcome their present crisis with confidence and dignity.

The Pandits have been singularly lucky that a substantial part of their early history was recorded by noteworthy historians of the day, culminating in the work of Kalhana, whose history of the kings of Kashmir, the *Rajatarangini* has rightly been considered of seminal importance in the historiographic tradition of India. Many other historians followed in his footsteps, thus adding to our knowledge of the ups and downs in the fortunes of the community in the early and major phases of its existence.

There is a legendary account of its origins, which is associated with the birth of the land itself – of a vast lake inhabited by a demon, who was destroyed by the sage Kashyapa under the benign gaze of gods and goddesses, who lent their names to its mountain ranges, rivers and streams, to make it a true abode of holy beings. The early tribal kings set up for the people the conditions of their living, and an elaborate calendar of activities lasting an entire year. This in itself is a very comprehensive account of the way of living of a community, a substantial part of which has descended down the generations. The calendar is truly inclusive, for it includes modes of worship of a host of gods and goddesses, rituals and rites, oblations, penance, and fasting, welcome to the changing seasons of the year, and a life style that stresses virtues of charity and compassion, habits of worship and prayer, and earthly pleasures of dancing, music, singing, and even making love.

The kings too were bound by a code of conduct that over and above the duties meant for commoners included helping their subjects to experience freedom from fear and bondage by showering love and affection upon them, keeping them safe from want and worry, and informing their lives with justice and fairness. And a large number of them did truly live up to these ideals. We have had kings who are matchless in their deeds and nobility of character. From among the early ones we even had a female ruler, Queen Yashomati, when people hardly knew of women rulers elsewhere, where the subjects looked up to her as a mother goddess.

The early kings were men of proven nobility and piety, of virtue and valour, of sagacity and wisdom, who raised new towns and cities, and built temples and *vihara*s for people of different religious persuasions. It is said that once a witch came to test the virtue of King Jaluka by asking him for food. When he promised to give her the food of her choice, she was quick to ask for human flesh, though she knew that he had renounced killing humans. When he offered flesh from his own body, she was impressed by his response and understood how futile it is to test the merit of a noble person. Even though it could be risky, she felt emboldened to tell him why she had done so.

On the basis of *Nilmata Purana*, Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, and the work of four other historians – Jonaraja, Shrivara, Shuka and Prajyabhatta that followed him, and the

account of travellers who visited Kashmir and stayed on for some years, it is possible to draw a brief picture of the varied aspects of the life of the people and their rulers.

We find the ancestors of Kashmiri Pandits a mixed group of Aryans, Nagas, Pishachas and others. Though Brahmins, being given mostly to learning and study with interests as varied as astrology, astronomy, philosophy, religion, aesthetics, medicine, etc. formed a significant class among them, the other groups, that is, Khastriyas, Vaishayas, Shudras, were no less important. There were also the Kaysathas or the official class, who wielded considerable influence in the political life of the country because of their administrative skills. Much later, the landed classes became powerful; they were known as Damaras and became virtual king-makers. The caste system of the kind that we often associate with rigid hierarchies and brutal and inhuman practices was virtually unknown in Kashmir.

Interestingly, women too enjoyed freedom that unfortunately diminished with the advent of Muslim rule in the Valley. The code of conduct set up by the early kings provided for the participation of women in most of the suggested activities. In fact, some major festivities were deemed incomplete without their active participation. Dance, music, and performances formed an integral part of social life; in many cases, the kings themselves took interest in such activities and set up new trends in fashion and social behaviour. People also enjoyed delicious foods, for they ate meats, fish, vegetables, soups of different kinds, and even wines. And most of these are still a part of the Kashmiri Pandit cuisine.

The levels of social cohesion can be gauged by the fact that several faiths flourished side by side – Buddhism, Shaivism, Vaishnavism, and older cults like those of Nagas. Because of the patronage that these faiths enjoyed from the rulers of the day, we find that each one of them had their periods of ascendancy. Buddhism, for example, was very strong during the times of King Kanishka. He chose his place as a venue for the Fourth Buddhist Council, in which participants came from far off places to shape the new school of Mahayana Buddhism. Much later, Shaivism forged ahead of Buddhism, and several sages and philosophers made it into a new intellectual and religious force, for which it is known even today. And this, in the main, is the one associated with Kashmiri Pandits.

The rich record of early Kashmiri Hindus in the field of aesthetics is too well known. Suffice here to mention here that they played a key role in creating a rich tradition of Sanskrit aesthetics, which is increasingly being recognized as a challenge to Western aesthetics.

It is somewhat unfortunate that the selfishness, greed, and depraved ways of the latter-day rulers spoiled the good work of the early kings of Kashmir, of Lalitaditya, Avantivarman, Jayasimha and a host of others. They craved for power, acted foolishly and wickedly, and gave themselves up to immoral pleasures. Because of this intrigues became commonplace. Every possible relative to the throne, no matter how distant,

aspired to occupy it. Brothers, uncles, nieces, mothers, grandmothers all took part in the scramble for power. Rogues found their way into royal palaces, and Tantriks and witches were engaged by all and sundry to overcome adversaries. The royal assembly lost its character, for it came to be occupied by whores, villains, idiots, and corrupters of young men and women. No wonder, the kings too became dissolute and licentious. Shankarvarman appropriated money meant for buying oil and incense in temples for his private pleasures. Kshemagupta indulged in wine, women and dice. Many others lusted after the wives of their subjects, ignoring even the generally observed norms of social standing. Sons became the enemies of their fathers; they fought them, imprisoned them, and killed them.

In this decline, we reach a point around the fourteenth century (1301 AD) when Sahadeva became the king of Kashmir. During his time two outsiders made their entry into Kashmir and gained prominence within a short period of time. Rinchin, a prince far up from the north, who was forced to flee his country, was given protection by the king. Shah Mir, an adventurer from Swat, was hospitably received by Ramchandra, the commander-in-chief of the king and kept under his protective wing.

During Sahadeva's reign, Kashmir became the victim of the depredations of Dulchu, a chieftain from Turkistan. The King tried to placate him by offering him large sums of money, but this did not work, because even after getting money, he did not go back. When he sounded the war drum, Sahadeva fled the place, forcing Ramachandra to face the wrath of Dulchu on his own. Fortunately for Ramachandra, Dulchu, along with his soldiers and thousands of slaves, was destroyed by bad weather on his way back to his land.

When Ramachandra declared himself the king of the land, Rinchin did not like it. He sent his soldiers disguised as peddlers, with arms hidden inside their long, flowing robes to stab him to death. To soften the shock of this dastardly deed, he married his daughter Kota and made her brother Ravanachandra his chief adviser. It is also believed, though many people have disputed it that he wanted to become a Hindu, but was not allowed to join the new faith. When Shah Mir told him that he could embrace the faith of the person he saw first on the next morning, he became a Muslim, because the person he saw was Bulbul Shah. But Rinchin did not last long; he was critically injured in one of the revolts, and then finally died. Since his son was too young to become the King, Kota invited Udyandeva, the cousin of Sahadeva to the throne, and married him. She had a son from him, whom she put in the care of Bhikshana Bhatta, who also became her advisor and commander of the forces. Once again, when a new invader attacked the land, the king ran away, but Kota managed to defeat him. The king returned but died after a short while, and Kota declared herself the ruler, which Shah Mir did not like. First, he maneuvered the murder of her principal adviser, and then he resorted to a stratagem to imprison her. It is believed that after assuming the reins of power, she agreed to his

request to marry him, but ended her life soon after entering the bridal chamber. Some, however, say that in the morning he handed her over to his executioners.

Shah Mir laid firm foundations of the Muslim rule in Kashmir, which virtually sowed the seeds of trouble for the Pandits, which have continued to dog them unabatedly since then. We have evidence of Muslim presence in the Valley right from the times of King Harsha; many of them were a part of his army. But with the coming of Muslim rulers, things changed. The basis of the political control of the state lay in the new faith; the rules and regulations that formed part of the political structure flowed from it, and the authorities on this were religious leaders.

The high level of interpenetration between the political and the religious is evident from the fact that Amir Sayyid Hamdani openly advised the father of Sultan Sikander on all aspects of statecraft, even on his personal life. When he learnt that he had two wives, who were blood sisters, he ordered him to divorce one and to enter into a new marriage contract with the other.

Sayyid Hamdani had come to Kashmir with a very large group of followers. He sent them to different parts of the Valley to attract people to the new faith. For the King, he proposed a different strategy. He made him conscious of his responsibilities as a true Muslim, stressing in particular the manner in which he had to deal with non-Muslims. For this he made use of the Muslim tradition, by invoking the authority of Caliph Omar, to teach him his duties and obligations towards the faith.

This development was of crucial import for the future of the Pandit community. In their own land they were now regulated and judged by norms and standards that came from the outside, turning them from a Pandit-Hindu to the non-Muslim other. The directions that are attributed to Caliph Omar and which Hamdani made the king to follow are numerous. The king was told not to allow them to construct new temples and not even to repair the old ones; the non-Muslims were expected to show their readiness to allow the entry of Muslims into their temples. They were to observe regulations governing their dress, like wearing clothes that would distinguish them from the Muslims, and their conduct in public, like not riding a harnessed horse.

The conditions, in short, were so stringent and so discriminatory that non-Muslims were bound to be branded defaulters on one count or the other, and this was enough to give legitimacy to the king and his officials to take control of their lives in whatever way they wished – by forcing them to convert to the new faith or by making them pay with their lives. Although the king did as much as he could, Hamdani was not happy with him, and left the land as a disappointed man.

As if to complete the work that Hamdani could not accomplish, his son Amir Sayyid Muhammad returned to Kashmir when Sikandar became the king. Together they worked to fulfill his dream. Sikandar accepted his commands with unqualified obedience, and did

everything within his power to spread the new faith. The things he did are patently anti-human, but he considered them a part of his religious obligation. With the help of his general, Malik Suh Bhatt, himself a new convert, the king raised temples to the ground and broke and desecrated so many idols that he earned the name of Sikandar, the idol breaker.

The Pandits were persecuted for remaining within their faith. Most of them were forced to convert to Islam: to embrace what was being propagated as the true faith. The scale of conversions can be gauged by the fact that three *kharvars* of sacred thread were burnt by the Sultan as proof of the good work that he did for propagating the new religion. Those who succeeded in escaping conversions and executions ran away to safer places in the south of India. The ones who dared to stay within their faith were not allowed to wear *tilak*; they had also to pay *jaziya*, a special tax for being non-believers. He ordered the collection of all the writings connected with Hindu religion, dumped them in the Dal Lake, and built a small causeway upon it. His most famous city Iskandapora was raised on the debris of the destroyed Hindu temples.

It looks somewhat strange and ironic that in spite of highly reliable evidence recorded by contemporary historians, some scholars are still trying to propagate the view that people embraced Islam in the Valley voluntarily, because they were lured by its attractions!

The Pandits, however, had a bit of good luck when soon after the atrocities committed on them by Sikander's first son, the kingdom passed into the control of his second son Shahi Khan, who assumed the title of Zainul Abdin at the time of coming to throne. And this happened somewhat accidentally. The king got a boil on his arm, which the known physicians failed to cure. When a Brahmin-physician Shriya Bhat succeeded in curing him, and the king asked him what he would like for a reward, he did not ask anything for himself. He requested him to rehabilitate the members of his community and allow them to practice their religion freely and fearlessly. And the king did keep his word.

He made it known that people who had left the land out of fear would be welcome in their old home. They were promised freedom and security. Many of them did return, for such is the lure of home in people's lives. This led to a different kind of division in the Pandits – *malmasi* and *banamasi*, the latter being the ones who returned after leaving the place.

The king also declared that those who had been forcibly converted to the Muslim faith would be allowed to return to their original religion without any disabilities. He abolished all the laws that had been specially enacted for punishing Hindus for sticking to their faith. He reduced *jaziya*, the tax on cremation, and banned cow slaughter.

The king also repaired damaged temples and built new ones, and revived the Hindu festivals and practices that had been banned. To encourage people to observe them with traditional zeal and fervour, he took active part in their celebration. He also took keen

interest in studying the sacred texts of the Hindus and encouraged scholars to translate them into the languages of the day. He brought back the books that had been taken out of the country. The king also took personal interest in the project of translating important religious texts of different religions in Sanskrit, Persian, and Kashmiri.

During this time, the *Bhattas* (Kashmiri Pandits) took to the learning of Persian and taking more active part in the governance of the country. This created one more division in the community: the *karkuns* and the *bhasha bhattas*. The former studied Persian and entered government services, and the latter took charge of the religious matters of the community. This too stratified over time, creating a new kind of social hierarchy, which persists even today. Many Brahmins gained prominence in administrative matters, which gave them a new visibility during later times.

Except for very brief interludes of relative ease, which resulted from the personal disposition of the rulers, the Pandits suffered heavily during the time of Muslim rule in Kashmir. If they saw the return of happy times, during the reign of Hassan Khan, who tried to do things like Zainul Abdin, they faced brutalities soon after, and touched a very low ebb when the political control of the kingdom passed into the hands of the Sayyids, who virtually made and unmade kings. One of the worst patches in the growing misfortune of the Pandits was the time when Chaks and Rainas shared the spoils of power.

During the time of Musa Raina, Shams-ud-Din Araki, the Shia preacher, worked with untiring zeal to pull down structures and force conversions. *Tohfatu'l Ahbab*, a contemporary account, provides a blow-by-account of the temples that were destroyed by Araki himself and his followers, the so-called dervishes, and the manner in which people were coerced into accepting the new faith. At one time, Araki stayed with Mulla Ismael somewhere in the vicinity of the great temple at Hari Parbat. When he heard the loud peal of drums and other musical instruments early in the morning, he felt more than upset, and declared to his followers that he had not come to Kashmir to hear that kind of noise. He had come to realize a divine mission: to pull down idol houses of infidels and polytheists and to put an end to the customs, traditions, and habits of the *kafirs* (infidels), and let the flag of Muslim faith fly over the entire kingdom. And he did that with ruthless efficiency. Systematically, he pulled down the temples, attended to the task of converting men folk, and then held special sessions to bring the women under his influence, so that the entire families were brought within the fold of the new faith. Because of this, many families quit their homes in very difficult circumstances to make their lives outside Kashmir. A contemporary historian Shuka describes their plight thus: "The Hindus were overpowered by the religious intolerants the same wise as the sun is overpowered by the grey sable clouds."

When the control of Kashmir passed into the hands of the Mughals, Pandits enjoyed mixed kind of luck. We learn form Akbar's biographer that Akbar had a high estimate

of the character of Pandits because of their religious tolerance and capacity to do good; so he helped them in their rehabilitation. He repealed punitive taxes like the *jaziya* and other fines, and gave trusted positions in different departments of the government to some of them. He even interacted with them socially, and took part in their festivities. The ones who had left their homes in Kashmir shone in the royal court in Agra and Delhi. Since the king took kindly towards them in Kashmir, some Pandits were encouraged to move out of Kashmir along with him, to attain name and fame in the world of politics and letters.

But Akbar's time proved only a brief spell of happiness in their lives, and things changed for the worse during the time of later Mughals. The Muslim officers of the rulers started forcing Hindu women to marry them; some, like Itqad Khan, the Mughal Subedar in the times of Jehangir, coerced Hindus to embrace Islam. Several temples were destroyed during the times of Jehangir. Tales of torture and persecution of the Pandits were heard during the time of Shah Jehan. The political climate of Kashmir became so vitiated that Muslim mobs organized themselves into groups to attack Pandits. Things touched a low ebb during the reign of Aurangzeb. He reimposed *jaziya* and his governor in the state adopted tyrannical ways to deal with the Pandits. The coercive policies of the rulers compelled the Hindus to seek the help of Guru Teg Bahadur to plead their case before the emperor. Aurangzeb's response was cruel and inhuman, for he ordered his brutal execution. He even ordered the governor Saif Khan to put Rishi Pir, who is still being revered as a great saint by the Pandits, under house arrest. The Mughal subedars like Muhatta Khan harassed and humiliated Hindus. Restrictions were put on their movement, and they were made to adhere to strict dress code so that they could be easily identified as a group that could be looted and plundered. It was virtually a throwback to the times of Sayyid Ali Hamdani and his son. Trade rivalries between the members of the two communities were settled with murders. The murder of Majlis Rai signaled the Pandits to flee their homes and move out of Kashmir. Because the ones who had moved out to Delhi and Agra did well there, the idea of leaving their homes became a better option for survival.

Towards the end of the Mughal rule, Kashmir politics had got embroiled into rivalries between local leaders. Two of them, Mir Muquim Kanth and Khwaja Zahir Didamari, induced Ahmad Shah Abdali to invade Kashmir, which led to the establishment of Afghan rule in Kashmir. Although the Afghans oppressed all Kashmiris, they were particularly cruel to the Pandits. To start with, they had to suffer at the hands of Kanth himself. Pandits were looted of their property and reduced to poverty. The severity of the highhanded ways of Muquim Kanth and its disastrous consequences are clearly reflected in these lines:

O Heart! Both fear and danger are rampant in the city.
Prepare for journey, for (Muquim) disorder is stationed in the city.

Because of a number of interesting circumstances, the administration of the country passed into the hands of Sukh Jiwan, who came from Gujarat to Kashmir with Abdali's army. Because Muslim leaders were prone to fighting among themselves, Sukh Jiwan thought it prudent to induct Pandits into the top administrative structure of the country. This is how Pandit Mahananda Dhar and his cousin Pandit Kailasha Dhar came into prominence. Even after the defeat of Sukh Jiwan at the hands of Nur-ud-din Khan who came to Kashmir as a representative of Abdali, Pandit Kailasha Dhar enjoyed the trust and confidence of the new leadership, but did not last long. Unfortunately, soon after, he too fell a victim to the rivalries of other small leaders. His old rival, Mir Muquim, plotted against him and killed him with his own sword right inside the Durbar Hall, and threw his dead body into the Jhelum river.

This event marked the first step towards destroying the rising influence of Pandits in the political sphere of the country. Many notables among them left Kashmir with the hope of returning during better times. Even among the ones who stayed on, some still enjoyed a strong public presence. That is why, under another dispensation, occasioned by the death of Abdali, Pandit Dila Ram slowly made his mark on the political horizon of the country. He not only undid several things that had put his community to a great disadvantage but also took several concrete measures to help all those who suffered because of unfair laws. He helped revive the shawl-making industry by rationalizing the tax structure that had hit them hard, and eased the hardship of the peasantry by abolishing several taxes against them. His prestige and power grew even after the new one succeeded the old Subedar. Although the new one was no less than a monster, he could not do much harm to people. When another Khan replaced the old one, Dila Ram made sure that the people were spared the ruthless policies of the Subedar. He even offered to remove unjust taxes levied on the Pandits, though they only asked to be allowed to live in peace.

Because Dila Ram flourished and stayed on in power even when people on top went on changing, he made several enemies, who waited for an opportune time to plan his downfall. At one time, he was charged with using profane language against the Muslim religion. His adversaries provoked people against him, who attacked him in his own home. Luckily for him, his Subedar, Mirdad Khan, unmoved by the vicious propaganda against him came to his rescue. Dila Ram was so proficient at maintaining revenue records of the state that he won the special respect of the Afghan king at Kabul, where he also won his heart by his coruscating wit. But soon after returning home, he fell a victim to the machinations of his enemies, and was murdered in Khanyar in 1793. This was followed by a reign of terror meant to destroy the entire tribe of Pandits. Many of

them were arrested, humiliated, imprisoned, and killed. All the harsh and discriminatory taxes were re-imposed on them. Because mastery over the Persian language had given them access to government jobs, they were forbidden to study the language. Any infringement of this ban invited certain death. Since many of them still held jobs in the Accounts Department, Mir Hazar Khan abolished it to render them jobless. When the Khan was forced to go to Kabul, he took along with him Pandit Nand Ram Tiku, who later rose to become the Diwan of Kabul.

When Abdullah Khan Alkozai was appointed the Subedar in 1796, he found the country in total disarray. He was quick to assess the ability of people who could carry on the task of administration, and decided to put it in the hands of Pandit Sahajj Ram Dhar. Though the subedars continued to change with rapidity, Sahaj Ram Dhar held on to his position because of his sheer merit. During the times of Azim Khan he rose to the position of the Diwan and Pandit Haradas Tiku took his place. But the failed invasion of Maharaja Ranjit Singh made a dramatic change, once again, in their fortunes. The neglected Muslim notables poisoned the ears of Azim Khan against the Pandits: that they were responsible for inviting the Sikhs to Kashmir. The first victim of this propaganda was Haradas Tiku, who was killed in 1813. Some more were removed from positions of power and influence and many were humiliated. Though this brought into prominence Nur Shah Diwani, Pandit Sahaj Ram Dhar continued to be there. When Nur Shah hatched a plot with the Subedar to destroy him along with other notable Pandits, Azim Khan decided to stay away from the scene. Fortunately for Sahaj Ram Dhar, one of the servants revealed the plot to him. Promptly, he went to Azim Khan, convinced him that his trust in Nur Shah was misplaced, and proved that he had looted state money. This led to the downfall of Nur Shah and all the leading Pandits were saved from a certain death. Not only that, some of these, such as Mirza Pandit, Pandit Birbal Dhar and Pandit Sukh Ram Safaya were appointed revenue collectors.

The Muslim instigators got busy again. Azim Khan made use of excuses to get even with them, especially with Birbal Dhar, who had to pay a large sum outstanding against him. He pleaded with the Subedar that the zamindars could not pay because the crops had failed. When pestered about it again and again, he insulted the Subedar in the Durbar Hall. Everybody felt that it had created a grave situation. The Pandits met and on their advice Birbar Dhar left Srinagar, and his family went into hiding. Because he could not find them, the Subedar caught hold of Basa Kak, but he refused to divulge their hiding place. For nine days he was heavily fined and on the tenth day he was killed. When Birbal Dhar's wife and daughter-in-law were finally found, the wife committed suicide, but the other one was converted to Islam.

Birbal Dhar went to meet Ranjit Singh and that paved the way for Sikh rule in Kashmir. When the Sikhs finally came, he saw to it that they did not loot and plunder

people. When Phool Singh wanted to demolish the mosque of Shah Hamdan, Birbal Dhar came in his way and prevented him from doing so.

During their rule, the Sikhs made sure that things remained under control. So they resorted to repressive measures, but they did not take to the vandalism of the early Muslim rulers. They did not want any section of the population to grow rich and thus be a source of trouble. So they told people to pay money to the *Sarkar* as *nazrana*. In the latter part of their rule, many Pandits were employed to set the tottering economy of the state in order. Ganesh Pandit was made the chief minister and Pandit Raja Kak Dhar the judicial administrator. After the death of Ranjit Singh, the army virtually revolted, which had its effect in Kashmir too. Colonel Mian Singh who looked after the state was murdered by the insurgent army, and soon after that, for the first time, a Muslim, Ghulam Mohi-ud-din, was appointed the governor of Kashmir. He appointed Pt. Tilak Chand Munshi as his chief minister. But because of developments outside Kashmir, the British gave over the country to Gulab Singh, which inaugurated the Dogra rule in Kashmir.

The Dogras brought with them a new class of administrators: the Punjabi Hindus. The new class replaced the Pandits, who had held top administrative positions even during the Afghan rule, though the village administration, to a very large extent, remained with them. A large number of Punjabi traders called Khatris came to live in Kashmir. Another interesting development that took place was the return of old Kashmiri Pandits who had made their mark in Punjab, but because they had changed considerably, they remained somewhat aloof from the native Pandits.

The Dogra rulers brought with them missionaries and exposure to western ways and thinking. This increased with the appointment of the British Resident in Kashmir. The efforts of the Pandits to have a college started for the people of Kashmir succeeded with the establishment of the Sri Partap Hindu College, which produced its first batch of graduates in 1911. Equipped with education suited to the times, the Pandits pleaded for sons of the soil policy for making appointments. The Pandits also made rapid strides in establishing a new culture of print media too. A significant conference of the leading Pandits was organized in Lahore in 1929 to find ways and means of protecting the interests of Kashmiris outside the state, most of whom were Muslim labourers.

Within Kashmir, their efforts coincided with the efforts of Sheikh Abdullah, who had joined as a school teacher, to organize people into a cohesive body. So there was the All State Muslim Conference and the Pandit Conference. The Pandits made it clear that organizational efforts could not be looked at through "communal glasses." They took a major part in weaning Abdullah away from sectarian politics, to create a truly secular body, the National Conference. Together they protested against the autocratic rule of the Maharaja. The leaders of India, who spearheaded the struggle of liberation against the British realized that apart from the Maharaja, they had also to deal with Abdullah. That

is why when the instrument of accession was finally signed, the power actually came into the hands of Abdullah, and the Pandits played a key role in making that happen.

This essay has only charted a broad outline of the odyssey of Pandits in history. This sketch clarifies that slowly and slowly they were reduced to a tiny minority within their own land. Even though they suffered at the hands of Muslims and had to leave Kashmir several times, some stayed back to keep the community alive. Whenever they got an opportunity to hold on to the reins of power because of their ability and acumen, they behaved gracefully. When rulers who came from the outside tried to be vengeful towards the Muslims, Kashmiri Pandits used their influence to prevent this from happening. They worked hard for creating a larger Kashmiri identity that was rich, diverse, and secular in true sense of the word. It is unfortunate that they have had to suffer at the hands of the very people whom they taught to dream of big things in life.

CHAPTER 3

Abhinavagupta and the Shaivite Tradition of the Śāradā Deśa

Rajnish Mishra

That the Śāradā Deśa (Kashmir) is getting erased from the mind of contemporary India is a grim reality. Kashmir is a fading memory – we experience how rapidly and consistently it is slipping out of the circuits of our mind. Those who have lost Kashmir, those who know Kashmir and those who know what it means to have lost a ***sarvajña pīṭha*** – can only know the magnitude and gravity of this loss and oblivion. What has already been lost successively by the thinking community and the *Bhārata-bhāgya-vidhātā-s* cannot be defended solely by the gallantry of the soldiers. Sāradā Deśa is much more than the geographical area. Who will ever know that this land has been a major confluence of various thought-streams like the Buddhists, Śaivas, Mīmāṁsakas, Naiyāikas and the Sufis? Who will ever understand the agony of being alien in one's own land? Should we learn from the experience of this heavenly land that a community has to pay price for being 'liberal' to other cultures without defending and understanding one's own ethos? Is Kashmir destined to survive either 'aesthetically' thanks to the stereotyped portrayal of the talkative media or 'strategically' as political analysts establish? This is the age that exemplified the motto – 'knowledge is power' (vide Francis Bacon) and in which knowledge has become an instrument to divide and subvert people. In the age of 'secular intellectuals' and so-called 'theory-builders', who will remember the simple, transparent and in-depth records of experienced truth of these saints and savants of Kashmir:

śikharastha jñānavat[1] (As a person sitting on the top of the mountain views the one-ness and continuity of all objects, in the same way a true knowledgeable person sees one-ness in all.) or as in *Anuttarāṣṭikā* (verse 2): *mā kiñcityaja mā gṛhāṇa vilasa swastho yathāvasthitaḥ* (Do not reject or accept as both are the cause of bondage. Be located in your own 'self' and experience the inner bliss which is the essential characteristic of the Universal Self.)

I

India is essentially a knowledge centred civilization. Great value is attached to knowledge in this tradition where knowledge and asceticism go together. Knowledge is that which liberates us from all the bondages and divisive limitations.[2] Nothing purifies like knowledge.[3] Our great scholars, like Bhatṛhari, Śaṅkarāchārya and Abhinavagupta were great ascetics as well and such scholars have always been received with great reverence by the people of this *cakravatikṣetra*[4] (the vast Indian sub-continent – not politically but culturally where every small or large community contributes to "Indian Culture" – a pattern of thought and way of life). Perhaps, this is the only part of this vast land that produced the largest number of great saints and savants in comparison to any other part of India. The city Srinagar, founded by the great Magadha King Aśhoka (272-232 BC), literally means the 'city of goddess Saraswatī'). Rājaśekhara records how beautifully and melodiously people of Kashmir recited poetry. It is natural as the land is blessed by goddess Saraswatī Herself who always dwells there.[5] Kalhaṇa records that Sanskrit was the medium of conversation in every family in Kashmir.[6] Kashmir has been the centre of fourteen disciplines of knowledge.[7] In the *Wonder that was India*,[8] young students during the *upanayana saṁsakāra* (initiation in the study of the *śāstra* texts under the guidance of the able teachers) used to articulate, *Kāśmīrān gacchāmi* (I go to Kashmir to attain knowledge). This tradition is still living in some branches of Vedic scholarship. Kalhaṇa in the *Rājataraṅginī* sings the glory of Kashmir.[9] Abhinavagupta and Jayaratha record a live picture of contemporary Kashmir in the last chapter of their works, i.e., *Tantrāloka* and the commentary *Viveka* thereupon. Abhinavagupta describes in his typical poetic style: *sthāne sthāne munibhirakhilaiścakrire yannivāsā*...(At every spot in Kashmir, there are hermitages of the sages and on every step Bhagawān Śiva dwells. There is no place in the world that provides supreme *siddhi*-s (accomplishment) – spiritual and mundane and brings overall contentment. This is the palce where Śāradā resides who is comparable with the rays of moon...)[10] Paṇḍita Iśwara Kaula (19th century AD) wrote the grammar titled *Kaśmīraśabdāmṛtaṁ* of Kashmiri in Sanskrit in *sūtra* style with commentary. This is precisely 'the Kashmir' which is referred to in the opening section of this paper.

II

Āgama[11] and *Nigama* are the two major sources of Indian culture (culture as 'mentifact'). *Nigama* (popularly known as Veda) is *dṛṣṭajñāna* (seen or realized knowledge)[12] whereas *āgama* is *upadiṣṭa* – knowledge expounded by none other than Śhiva and Pārvatī. These texts have come down to us from distant antiquity in the form of the innermost dialogue between the Śhiva and Pārvatī – the two aspects of the same Universal Self. In the knowledge systems of India these texts (*Āgama* and *Nigama*) have the status of valid means of knowledge – knowledge that leads to the realization of the Universal Self. Later on when the scholars use the term *āgama pramāṇa*, it implies both these texts.

Keeping in view the vast body of knowledge texts, composed and recorded at different points of time, it is extremely difficult to classify them under some categories. Modern scholars have faced great difficulties in classifying the texts and thinkers. J.C. Chatterji[13] proposes three broad divisions:

A. The *Āgama Shāstra*: Texts that have come down in the tradition in the form of dialogue between Śhiva and Pārvatī (i.e., Bhairava and Bhairavī). The *Śiva-Sūtra* is also enumerated under this class.

B. The *Spanda Shastra*: *Spanda-Sūtra* (also popularly known as Spanda-Kārikā. Sūtra and Kārikā have been used as synonyms in the titles of the Śhaiva texts – *Pratyabhiñā-Kārikā or Pratyabhijñā-Sūtra*) along with its several commentaries such as *Vivṛti* by Rāmakṇtha, *Pradīpikā* by Utpala, *Spanda-Sandoha* and *Spanada-Nirṇaya* by Kṣemarāja.

C. The *Pratyabhijñā Shāstra*: Only this part of the Śhaiva texts could be understood what we generally termed as *darśna* (*vicāra-śāstra* – a school of thought). This is the logical exposition of the Trika Śāstra. The *Śivadṛṣṭi* of Siddha Somānanda is the foundational texts in this category. Other attested texts in this *śāstra* are *Iśwara-Pratyabhiñā-Kāikā* and *Vivṛti* there upon of Utpala, *Iśwara-Pratyabhiñā-Vimarśinī* (*Laghvī*) and *Iśwara-Pratyabhiñā-Vivṛti-Vimarśinī* (*Bṛhatī*) of Ācārya Abhinavaguptapāda, *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam* of Kṣemarāja. But above all, *Tantrāloka* is 'a class by itself' – an encyclopedic text of the whole *āgama-śāstra*. Abhinavaguptapādācārya is the composer-narrator of this text and Bhagawān Śhiva Himself is the listener.[14]

But similarly the *āgama-śāstra* and the philosophical systems emanating from these *āgamas* are again classified as *dvaita*, *dvaitādvaita* and *advaita* (i.e., dualistic, dualistic-cum-non-dualistic and non-dualistic). (See Appendix 1). There is another typology based on the types of texts and their respective philosophical systems:

(i) Kula

(ii) Krama
(iii) Spanda
(iv) Pratyabhijñā

The first three are mystic, experiential and meditative. Only the last one is expository in nature like the other systems of Indian philosophy. As we see later, in Abhinavagupta all these streams converge and take an integrated form.

III

As stated above, the tradition believes that the source of *āgama śāstra* is Bhagawan Śhiva and Devī Bhagavatī Pārvatī themselves. The diagram below illustrates how the Sage Durvāsā, on instructions of Bhagawān Śhiva taught three streams of *āgamas*, namely dual, dual-cum-non-dual and the non-dual, to his three disciples/sons (*mānasa-pūtra*) Śrīnātha, Āmardaka and Trayambaka respectively. A little later there is reference to the fourth school designated as Ardha-Tryambaka that emanated from the daughter's side of Trayambaka. Siddha Somānanda (9th Century AD) in the last chapter of his foundational text of Kashmir Śhiva philosophy (also known as *Pratyabhijñā Darśanam*), *Śivadṛṣṭi*, records the lineage of the school of Trayambaka, of which he himself claims to be the 19th descendent. However, he does not provide the name of the earlier fourteen descendents, but he records the names of fifteenth to eighteenth descendents as Saṅgamāditya, Varṣāditya, Aruṇāditya and Ānanda.

Siddha Somānanda's son and pupil Utpaladeva (875-925 AD) composed his famous work *Pratyabhijñā Kārikā* or *Sūtra*. Persian scholars of Kashmir have designated it as *Khird-e-Kamil* (wisdom of the sage). Utpaladeva also wrote an auto-commentary *Vivṛti* on this text which was later on commented upon by Abhinavagupta (*Iśwarapratyabhiñā – Vivṛti-Vimarśinī* or *Bṛhatī Vimarśinī*). He composed devotional poems, of which *Śivastotrāvalī* is a landmark in the Indian devotional literature. Utpala's poetic compositions were compiled by his disciples – Śrī Rāma and Ādityarāja. Later a great scholar, Viśwavasta, divided these into 20 *stotras* assigning a pertinent title to each. It is believed that Utpala himself had assigned the titles – Saṅgrahastotra, Jayastotra and Bhaktistotra to 13th, 14th and 15th *stotras*. This devotional composition is known as *Śivastotrāvali* (a rosary of hymns to Śhiva) on which Kṣemarāja, a disciple of Abhinavagupta wrote a Sanskrit commentary. Persian scholars of Kashmir have termed *Śivastotrāvali* (or Utpala-Stotrāvali) as *Jnoon-e-Kamil* (divine ecstasy of the sage). The pupil and son of Utpaladeva, Guru Lakṣmaṇanātha initiated Abhinavagupta in the non-dualistic philosophy and meditation. Guru Śambhunātha of the Jalandhara *pīṭha* who comes in the lineage of Ardha-Trayambaka school was also the teacher of Abhinavagupta.

The tradition of Kshmir Śhaivism ascribes two seminal texts *Śhiva-Sūtra* and *Spanada-Kārikā* to Siddha Vasugupta. *Rājataraṅgini* of Kalhaṇa[15] records that Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa, the

pupil of Vasugupta, was a contemporary of King Avantīvarmana of Kashmir (855-883 AD) On the other hand Kṣemendra,[16] a great poetician, philosopher and direct disciple of Abhinavagupta refers to a tradition which holds that Vasugupta preserved the texts of *Śhiva-Sūtra* which he had found inscribed on the rocks of Mahādeva mountain in Kashmir.[17] The *Spanda-Kārikā* (or *sūtra*)[18] is also ascribed to Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa, a contemporary *siddha* of Vasugupta. But both Kṣemarāja in his commentary *Spanda-Nirṇaya* and Maheśwarānanda in his celebrated work *Mahārtha-Mañjarī* attribute this work to Vasugupta. Several other works, such as *Spandāmṛta*[19] and *Vasavī Ṭīkā*, a commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*, are ascribed to Vasugupta. Bhaṭṭa Kallata's (855 AD) biographical details are not much known except for his time and works. He composed a commentary *Spanda-Sarvasva* on the *Spanda-Kārikā*. *Tattvārtha-Cintāmaṇi* is a commentary on the last quarter of the *Śiva-Sūtra*. He composed two more texts *Spanda-Sūtra* (vide the authority of Bhāskarācārya's *Vārttika* on the *Śiva-Sūtra*) and *Madhuvāhinī*.[20] Rāmakaṇṭha (10th Century AD) contributed an important commentary, *Spanda-Vivaraṇa-Sāramātra* on the *Spanda-Kārikā*. His two more works are also recorded in Kashmir Śaivism (Kashmir Sanskrit Series 1914) with a question mark. Bhāskarācārya, an older contemporary of Abhinavagupta, composed *Śiva-Sūtra-Vārttika*, a commentary on the *Śiva-Sūtra* and *Vivekajñāna* (referred only). Both Bhūtirāja and his son referred as Bhūtirājatanaya were the teachers of Abhinavagupta in the domains of dualistic Śhaivāgamas, Brahma-Vidyā and Krama philosophy. Abhinavagupta's *Tantrāloka* is full of references to the dualist and the dualist-cum-non-dualist schools of the Śaiva/Tantra philosophy which he quite often contests and refutes.[21] *Siddhānta* and *Lakulīśa Pāśupata* are the two major branches of these *āgamic* sects that still flourish in south India.

IV

We are fortunate that Abhinavagupta, like many scholars-poets of great repute, is not silent about his lineage and life. In *Parātrimśikā Vivarṇa*, he vividly describes the name of his earliest ancestor as Atrigupta who was born in Antarvedi – the Doab between the Ganges and the Jamuna.[22] Again at many places in *Tantrāloka* he refers to the intellectual environs of his time, his family members, his teachers in various disciplines and also the mighty Kings who also contributed to the glory of Kashmir. Lalitaditya (725-761 AD) also known as Mukhtapīḍa was "fond for conquests." He defeated Yasosvtarman, the king of Kannauj, and along with the booty also brought Atrigupta, ancestor of Abhinavagupta, to Kashmir. Abhinavagupta records: "In that beautiful city (Srinagar) like that of Kubera's (Alakapurī) in front of the temple of Bhagawan Śītaṁśumauli (Śiva having the moon as his crest) on the Vitastā (Jhelum river), the king got built for him a spacious house and also granted a *jāgīr* of land to him. However, there is a veritable gap of a century and a half between Atrigupta and Abhinavagupta's grandfather Varahagupta for which Abhinavagupta does not provide any details of his family. But he explicitly records the name of his father and mother as

Narasinhagupta, popularly known as Chukhulaka and Vimalakala respectively.[23]

Mahāmāheśwara Abhinavaguptapādācārya (a *yoginībhūḥ*, 'born of the yogic powers' as his commentator Jayaratha describes him[24]) is the watershed in the intellectual history of India. As we see in the subsequent sections, he studied under one of the best teachers of his time in major disciplines like grammar, poetics, philosophy, *tantra* and mysticism which is always compounded by his own gifted reflections. That is the reason his statements have been held with great regard in the Indian intellectual tradition. Abhinavaguptapāda's exposition of the issues relating to these domains remained unquestionable and has prevailed in the subsequent times. He was preceded by the long and rich *āgamic* traditions and philosophical thought. There is no historical evidence as such of the origin of these *agamas*. In the form of intimate dialogue between Śiva and Pārvatī, these *āgamas* are rich in philosophical and mystic *tāntric* content. On the basis of available historical evidence, Kashmir seems to be the home of *agamic* traditions.[25] These *āgamas* are categorized on the basis of their nature and mode of the philosophy they expound. Like the thought systems that emerged from the Vedic sources, *āgamas* are also divided as dualist, non-dualist and dualist-cum-non-dualist. Emanating from these sources, the four traditions of Kashmir Śhaivism – *dvaita* (dualist), *dvaitādvaita* (dualist-cum-non-dualist), *advaita* (non-dualist) and the school of *ardha*-Trayambaka (from the side of Śrī Trayambaka's daughter) have been recognized in Kashmir. Scholars have often associated the Dualist and non-Dualist schools of Śhaivism in South India such as: Vīra, Nakulīśa Pāśupata, Raseśwara and Siddhānta Śhaiva with the traditions of Śhaiva philosophy Kashmir.[26] The South Indian branches of Kashmir Shaivism are mainly the Dualist or Dualist-non-dualist schools. These philosophical systems of all the traditions of Dualist and non-Dualist scholars belong to the *saguṇa ātmavādī āstika* branch of Indian philosophy. It seems that the non-dualist systems like *Pratyabhijñā* flourished in Kashmir and other two branches migrated towards South India. However, there is no sufficient evidence to establish as to why these systems migrated and stayed in south India. This also looks strange as we do not find any other trace of these systems in central India. Varanasi remained an exception in this regard as it has been the seat of learning of many intellectual and mystic traditions of India. Here we also have historical as well as mythical evidence to establish its association. As an important Śhaiva seat of learning and cult, even today the culture of Varanasi/Kashi bears some traces of *Pratyabhijñā* system of Kashmir.[27]

On the basis of internal textual sources, we may have the following dimensions of Abhinavagupta's learning. In ***Tantrasāra*** he states the argument for studying various disciplines from the respective outstanding scholars who originally belong to that school and inherit a vast amount of learning. On the basis of the evidence provided by Abhinavagupta himself in his philosophical, literary and *tantric* works we may posit the following names of his teachers with regard to the disciplines.

Sources of Abhinavagupta

	His teachers	*Texts and disciplines*
1.	Narsiṃhagupta	Grammar
2.	Vāmanātha	Dual and dual-non-dual Tantra
3.	Bhūtirājatanaya	Dualist Śaiva Philosophies
4.	Lakṣmaṇagupta	Pratyabhijñā, Krama, Trika
5.	Bhaṭṭta Indurāja	Dhvani Siddhānta, *Gītā* (see Hindi *Abhinvabhāratī* p.35, *Bhagavad – Gītārthasaṃgraha* I.6.)
6.	Bhūtirāja	Brahmavidyā, Krama Darśana, Dualistic Śaivāgamas
7.	Tautta Bhaṭṭta	Nāṭyaśāstra
8.	Śambhūnātha	Kaulāgama
9.	Abhinanda (10th century AD)	Literature (author of *Kādambarī Kathāsāra*)

Moreover, Abhinavagupta mentions his thirteen other teachers in a verse, which is quoted in Mammaṭa's *Kāvyaprakaśa* edited by Acharya Visweshwara.[28] Since Abhinavagupta is a representative teacher of all the branches of Kashmir Śhaivism and is a great synthesizer in the tradition, it is difficult to classify his works and to consider him a philosopher of a particular branch. His works encompass a range of disciplines marked with his scholarship- *tantra*, philosophy, poetics, literary compositions, music etc. However, the tradition holds that he is the philosopher of Kula branch of Kashmir Śhaivism. This claim is supported by his inclination towards this system in his *Tantrāloka*. Abhinavagupta's literary activities lie between 980-1020 AD. His philosophical works precede the literary works. *Locana* was composed prior to *Abhinavabhāratī* because *Abhinavabhāratī* bears the reference of *Locana*.[29]

What makes Abhinavagupta remarkable is not only his own authoritative and extensive works in various domains of knowledge. He is distinguished, like Āārya Śaṅkara, for nurturing and developing a whole *śiṣya-varga* (group of disciples) of great repute. Among his direct or indirect disciples of repute are: Kṣemarāja, Madhurāja Yogin, Yogarāja, Subhaṭ Datta, Jayaratha, Śobhākaragupta, Bhaskarakaṇṭha, Kṣemendra, Maheśwarānanda (also known as Gorakṣa) and Varadarāja (also known as Kṛṣṇadāsa).

In the colophons of all his works, Kṣemarāja calls himself a disciple of Abhinavagupta-pādācārya. Madhurāja Yogin in his *Dhyānaślokāḥ* describes him as one of the greatest disciples of Abhinavagupta[30] who noted down the exposition on music orally delivered by Abhinavagupta. Kṣemarāja, like an able disciple of his great teacher wrote in the disciplines of *tantra*, poetics and philosophy. He wrote a commentary *Udyaota* on Abhinavagupta's *Locana* which is not available. His major works include: *Svacchandodyota* (a commentary

on *Svacchanda Tantra*), *Netrodyota* (a commentary on *Netra Tantra*), *Vijñānabhairavodyota* (a commentary of *Vijñānabhairava*, a text of Śaiva Yoga), *Spanda-Sandoha* (a commentary of the first verse of *Spanda-Kārikā*), *Spanda-Nirṇaya* (a commentary on the whole *Spanda-Kārikā*), *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam* (with his own commentary), *Śiva-Sūtra-Vimarśinī*, *Vivṛti* (on Stava-Cintāmaṇī), *Utpala Stotrāvalī-Ṭīkā, Parā-Praveśikā, Ṭīkā* on *Sāmba-Pañcāśikā*, a commentary on the *Krama-Sūtra*, *Stotra* (devotional composition), *Bhairavānukaraṇa-Stotra, Paramārtha-Saṅgraha-Vivṛti* and *Vivṛti* on *Parameśa-Stotrāvali* of Utpaladeva. Madhurāja Yogī, a very close and devoted disciple of Ācārya Abhinavagupta, wrote three devotional poems: *Svātmaparāmarśa*, *Gurunāthaparamarśa* and *Śāstraparāmarśa*. Prof. K.C. Pandey reports that the manuscripts of these texts were in possession of Gopinath Kaviraj and Mahāmahopādhyaya Narayana Khriste of Varanasi.[31]

Yogarāja (second half of 11th century AD) commented upon the *Paramārthasāra* of Abhinavagupta. His commentary is known as *Vivṛti*. In the concluding line of this text he calls himself a disciple of Kṣemarāja.

Subhaṭadatta (later half of 12th century AD) is the first known commentator on *Tantrāloka*. This commentary, *Vivṛti*, has not been available so far. Jayaratha in his *Viveka* states that his initiation in Śhaivism was performed by Subhaṭadatta.[32]

In the last chapter of his commentary *Viveka* (on *Tantrāloka*), Jayaratha (12-13th century AD) provides a description of his ancestors. *Viveka* is indispensable for understanding the encyclopedic work *Tantrāloka*. Jayaratha also contributed two works on Indian poetics: *Alaṁkāra-Vimarśinī* (a commentary on the Kashmir poetician Ruyyaka's *Alaṁkāra-Sarvasva*) and *Alaṁkāodāharaṇa*.

Śobhākaragupta wrote a commentary on the Abhinava's *Bhairava-Stotra* from the Vaiṣṇavite point of view. Prof. K.C. Pandey possessed a MSS. of this commentary.[33]

Bhāskarakaṇṭha (18th century AD)wrote his famous commentary *Bhāskarī* on *Īśwara-Prtyabhiñā-Vimarśnī* of Abhinavagupta. He translated/transliterated the *Lalla-Vāk* (devotional composition of the 14th century AD woman saint poet Lalla Devi) into Sanskrit. Bhāskarakaṇtha wrote a commentary on the *Yogavāśiṣtha* (ascribed to sage Vālmiki) which is Śaivite interpretation of this text. Unfortunately the commentary is no longer available. He also composed *Harṣeśwara-Stotra*, a devotional poem on the occasion of his visit to the Harṣeśwara temple in Kashmir.

Kṣemendra was the direct disciple of Abhinavagupta and is author of the school of *Aucitya* (Propriety) in Indian poetics vide his work *Aucitya-Vicāra-Carcā*. His other works include: *Mahābhārata-Mañjarī, Rāmāyaṇa-Kathā-Sāra, Cāru-Caryā, Nīti-Kalpa.Taru, Daśāvatāra-Carita, Samaya-Mātṛkā, Bṛhatkathā-Mañjarī and Suvṛtta-Tilaka*.

Maheśwarānanda[34] (12th century AD, the celebrated author of *Mahārtha-Mañjarī* and a commentary thereupon *Parimalā*, was a dedicated follower of Abhinavagupta. Though he

does not belong to Kashmir (from the country of Cola) but he received *Pratyabhijñā* and other branches of Kashmir Śaivism from the lineage of his *gurus*. He is equally well-versed in Kaula and Krama systems. He frequently quotes from Abhinavagupta and acknowledges his debt in study of poetics and philosophy.

Other eminent Sanskrit scholars of Kashmir are: Allaṭa (poetics), Ādyanātha, Ānandavardhana (poetics – the founder of Dhvani School and literature), Ānandakavi, Udbhaṭa (poetics), Uvvaṭa (poetics), Kallaṭa (philosophy), Kuntaka (poetics – founder of Vakrokti School), Keśava, Guṇāḍhya (literature), Gorakṣanātha, Jayadratha, Jayaratha (philosophy and poetics), Jayantabhaṭṭa (Naiyāyika), Jahalaṇa, Dāmodara, Dṛḍhabala, Nāgārjuna, Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha, Nīlamuni, Puṇyarāja, Puṇyānanda, Pratihārendurāja (poetics), Ballala, Bhaṭṭatauta (poetics), Bhaṭṭanāyaka (poetics), Bhartṛmeṇṭha, Bhallaṭa, Bhāmaha (founder of Sanskrit poetics – particularly of the Alṁkāra School), Bhīmabhaṭṭa, Maṅkhaka (poetics), Mahimbhaṭṭa (poetics and Nyāya philosophy), Mukulabhaṭṭa (Mīmāṁsā philosophy), Muktākaṇa, Murāri Kavi, Ratnakaṇṭha, Rāmakaṇṭha, Ratnākara, Rudraṭa (poetics), Ruyyaka (poetics), Lalla, Bhaṭṭalollaṭa (poetics), Vāmadevabhaṭṭa, Vāmana (poetics – founder of the school of Rīti), Bilhaṇa (literature), Śambhukavi, Śilābhaṭṭārikā, Śivaswāmi, Śrīśaṅkuka (poetics and Nyāya philosophy), Śrīharṣa, Sadyojyoti, Suvrata, Somadeva, Somasambhu, Somendra, Harścandra, Helārāja (grammarian) Hrasvanātha, Aghoraśivācārya, Indurājabhaṭṭa, Eraka, Ghaṇṭka, Tryayambakāditya,, Devabala, Bṛharspati, Bhāskarakaṇṭha, Varadarāja (grammar and Tantra), Śivānandanātha, Śobhākaragupta, Śyamalaka, Subhṭadatta, Somarāja.

Kashmir along with Gandhāra remained one of the two major centres of Abhidharma branch of Buddism for centuries.

V

Kashmir also nurtures an illustrous tradition of mystics, sages and saints. Nund Rishi, as the Hindus of Kashmir reverently call him, was a great synthesizer of Hinduism and Sufism. Lad Ded, Rupa Bhawani, Reshi Pir Pandit, Riche Ded, Swami Ramji, Swami Jivan Shah, Swami Paramanand, Swami Ramji, Swami Shankar Razdan, Swami Vidyadhara, Swami Sonkak Ji, Bhagawan Gopinath Ji, Kral Bab Ji, Khwaja Lassa Sahib, Swami Lakshman Joo, Pandit Zinda Koul, Pandit Radha Krishna Kaul, Swami Aftabjoo Wangnoo Mohtsib, Swami Maheshwar Nath Ji, Swami Mirza Kak, Swami Govind Kaul and many other saints have been the mystic luminaries of Kashmir. It is not an easy task to present the full glory of Śāradā Deśa. Let us conclude with these words of Lal Ded:

With a thin rope of untwisted thread
Tow I ever my boat o'er the sea.

Will God hear the prayers that I have said?
    Will he safely over carry me?
Water in a cup of unbaked clay,
    Whirling and wasting, my dizzy soul
Slowly is filling to melt away.
    Oh, how fain would I reach my goal.

(*Translated* by **R.C. Temple**)

Kashmir is an over-arching concept – a unifying principle of this whole vast Indian sub-continent. It is the birth-place of *Pratyabhijñā Darśana* (philosophy of Re-cognition).[35] In the contemporary circumstances, one can only pray and hope that this vast sub-continent will wake up to its importance and contribution and will 're-cognize' both this Kaśyapa Bhūmi/Śāradā Deśa and its *Pratyabhijñā*.

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1. *Tantrasāra* of Abhinavagupta, Ch. 1.
2. *sā vidyā yā vimuktaye.*
3. *na hi jñānena sadṛśam pavitramiha vidyate, Bhagwad Gītā* 4.38.
4. See Rājaśekhara's *Kāvyamīmāmsā*, Ch 2.
5. *Ibid.*, Ch. 6
6. "*gṛhe gṛhe sabhyapura dhrivargā vyavāharan Sanskṛtabhāṣṇena*" Quoted in *Kāśmiretihāsa* by Acharya Hanumatprasad Shastri, p. 12.
7. "*Kāśmīraṁ caturdaśavidyānāṁ pīṭhaṁ*", says the great Sanskrit epic-poet and philosopher Śrīharṣa (*Naiṣdhīyacaritaṁ* 16. 131)
   Fourteen *vidyāsthāna* (disciplines of learning):
   purāṇanyāyamīmāṁsādharmaśāstāṅgamiśritāḥ /
   vedāḥ sthānāni vidyānāṁ dharmasya ca caturdaśa //
   [*Yājñyavalkya Smṛti*, I.3]
   Fourteen *vidyāsthāna*:
   4 *Veda*+6 *Vedāṅga*+4 *Śāstra* (18 *Purāṇa*, 6 *Ānvikṣikī*, 2 *Mīmāṁsā*, 18 Major *Smṛti*).**= 14**
8. The title of the celebrated work in Indian history before the advent of Islam by A.L. Basham.
9. *Rājataraṅginī* 1.29-43
10. *Tantrāloka* 37. 40-41.
11. ***āgama*:** non-contingent texts (*apauruṣeya*), one of the two branches of Indian discourses (another is *nigama* =*Veda*); a name of the *tāntric* system that generally refers to the early āaiva literature on Tantra. Vācaspati Miúra, in his *Tattvavaiśāradī* (on *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali) I.7. explicates: *āgacchanti buddhimārohanti yasmādabhyudayaniḥśreyasopāyāḥ sa āgamaḥ* [That through which the intellect attains welfare and salvation is *āgama*]. According to the *Vārāhī Tantra*, there are seven characteristics/topics of *āgama*:
    śṛṣṭiśca pralayaścaivadevatānāṁ yathārcanaṁ/
    sādhanaṁ caiva sarveṣāṁ puraścaraṇ?meva ca//
    ṣaṭkarmasādhanaṁ caiva dhyānayogaścaturvidhaḥ/

saptabhihrlakṣaṇairyktamāgamaṁ tad vidurbudhāḥ//

[1. Creation, 2. Dissolution, 3. Methods of the rituals related to the deities, 4. Ways of achieving the desired ends, 5. *puraścaraṇa*: Accomplishment of the rituals like destruction, enchantment, detachment, etc., 6. *ṣaṭakarma*: means of peace, enchantment, hindrance, antipathy, detachment and destruction, 7. meditation of the concerned/desired deity with concentration of mind that facilitates the manifestation of the deity.

Āgama(s) are action-oriented (*nigama*: knowledge-oriented). They emphasize the practical aspects of knowledge, i.e. ways to achieve the real state of Being.

The *āgama* (scripture) deserves the status of epistemology (*pramāna*). Abhinavagupta brings forth the essential feature of *āgama*: All the *āgama* share one essential feature that their validity and strength is derived from *prasiddhi* (conventions or general consensus). The truth they contain has never been contradicted with worldly experience. (*Tantrāloka* XXXVII.1).

Jayaratha also explains that *prasiddhi* which has been accepted/established beyond doubt, is *āgama* and it is one of the valid means of knowledge. It never contradicts our experience of the world [*Tantrāloka* (Viveka) I.18]

In Buddhism, the *sūtra* (aphorism) of *Saravāstivādin* (one of the four schools of the Buddhist thought that holds: Everything, mind and matter, exists.) are also called *āgama*. The *Theravādī sūtra* are called *nikāya*. The seminal Jain texts are also designated as *āgama*.

12. Pāṇini' Aṣṭādhyāyī : *dṛṣṭam sāma* 4.2.7.
13. J.C. Chatterji, *Kashmir Shaivism*, pp.7-21.
14. *Tantrāloka* 37.85
15. *Rājataraṅginī*, Ch. V. 66.
16. Kṣemendra, *Śiva-Sūtra-Vimarśinī* (Introduction)
17. Jayaratha also refers to this sacred mountain which must have been an important pilgrimage till that time. *Viveka* commentary on *Tantrāloka* Ch. 37 (the appendix part, verse 37)'
18. Although *sūtra* is a technical word in grammar and philosophy, in Śaiva literature it has often been used as a synonym for *kārikā*. For more details on this topic see Rājaśekhara's *Kāvyamīmāṁsā*, Ch.2.
19. J.C. Chatterji's *Kashmir Shaivism*, p. 37. However, Prof. K.C. Pandey has a different opinion. For details, see his pioneering work *Abhinavagupta: An Historical and Philosophical Study*, p. 156.
20. J.C. Chatterji's *Kashmir Shaivism*, p. 37
21. Jayaratha makes an explicit reference to the philosophers of these schools in his *Viveka* on *Tantrāloka* VI. 250.
22. *Parātriśikā-Vivaraṇa*.
23. *Tantrāloka* 1.1.
24. *Viveka on Tantrāloka*, 1.1.
25. Vide *Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. V, Introduction.
26. S.S. Suryanaryana Shastri, "*The Philosophy of Saivism*" in Cultural Heritage of India, Vol. III, p. 396. fn. "The contrast in localities is unsound; for many of the early writers of the realist school, e.g., Sadyojyoti, Rāmakaṇṭha, Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha and others seem to have belonged to Kashmir. Tradition has it that **Tirumular**, perhaps the earliest Tamil Shaivite, brought Shaivism to the South from the North, possibly Kashmir. The editors of the Kashmir Shaivism series recognize that dualist Shaivism too has a home in Kashmir; and one of the works published by them, the *Nareśvara-Parīkṣā*, belongs to this school".
27. Mahakavi Jay Shankar Prasad's monumental work Hindi epic ***Kāmāyanī*** reflects deep influence of this philosophy. Dr. Parahamsa Mishra an outstanding scholar of this system also belongs to this center of India's intellectual traditions.
28. Acharya Visweshwara (ed.) (1960), *Kāvyaprakśa*, p. 52.

29. *Abhinavabhāratī.* (Kashi Series) p. 368.
30. *Kṣemarājaprabhṛtibhirakhilaih sevitaḥ śiṣyavargaḥ.*
31. *Abhinavagupta: An Historical and Philosophical Study*, p. 257.
32. *Tantrāloka* (*Viveka*) 12.433.
33. *Abhinavagupta: An Historical and Philosophical Study*, p. 263.
34. *Mahārtha-Mañjarī* 202.
35. *pratīpamātmābhimukhyana jñānam prakāśaḥ* (*ūśvara-Pratyabhijñā-Vimarśinī* I.1.)

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4. *Ratnatraya*	Śrīkaṇṭhasūri	Aghoraśiva	*Ullekhinī*
5. *Bhogakārikā*	Saddyojyoti	Aghoraśiva	*Vṛtti*
6. *Nādakārikā*	Rāmakaṇṭha	Aghoraśiva	*Vyākhyā*
7. *Mokṣakārikā*	Saddyojyoti	Ramakaṇṭha	*Vyākhyā*
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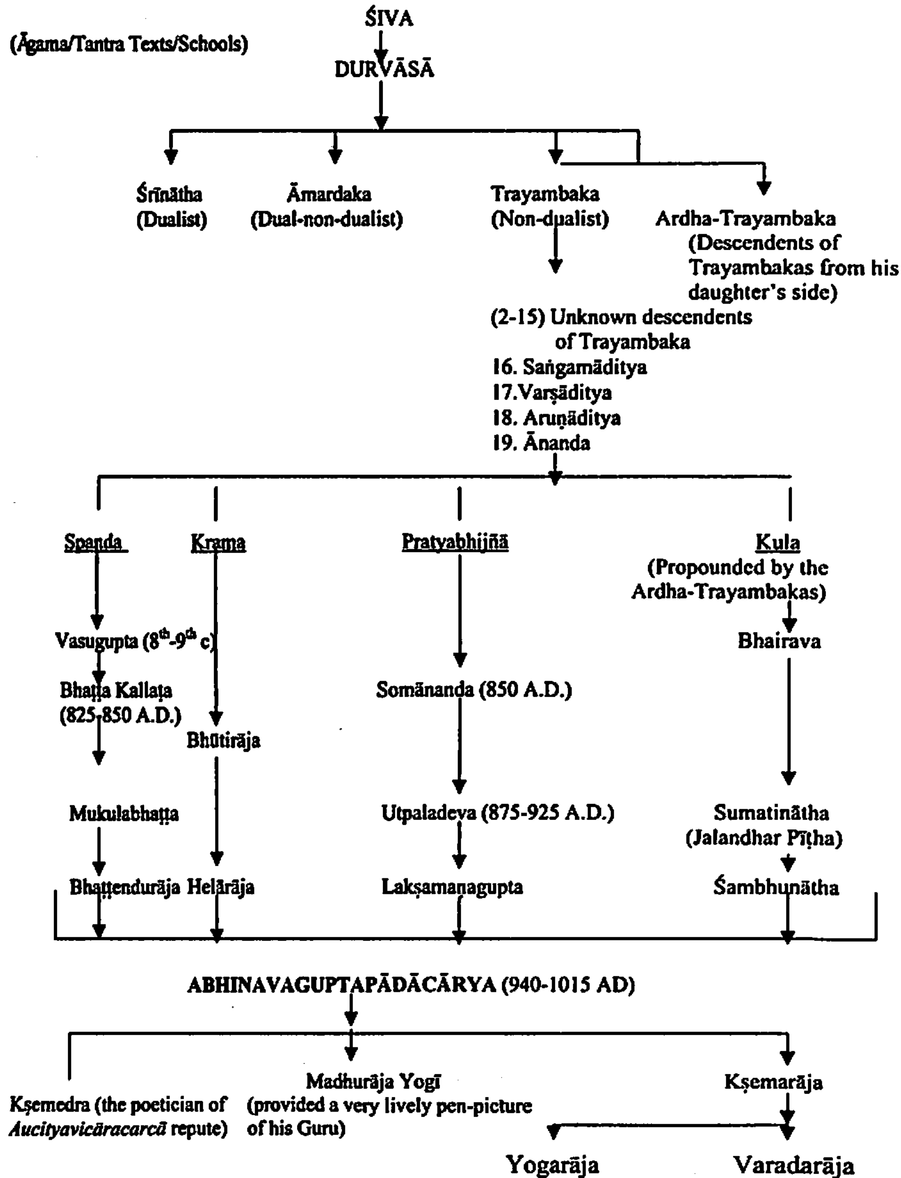
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APPENDIX 1

ŚAIVA PHILOSOPHY: GENESIS AND MAJOR SCHOOLS
A MYTHOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL VIEW



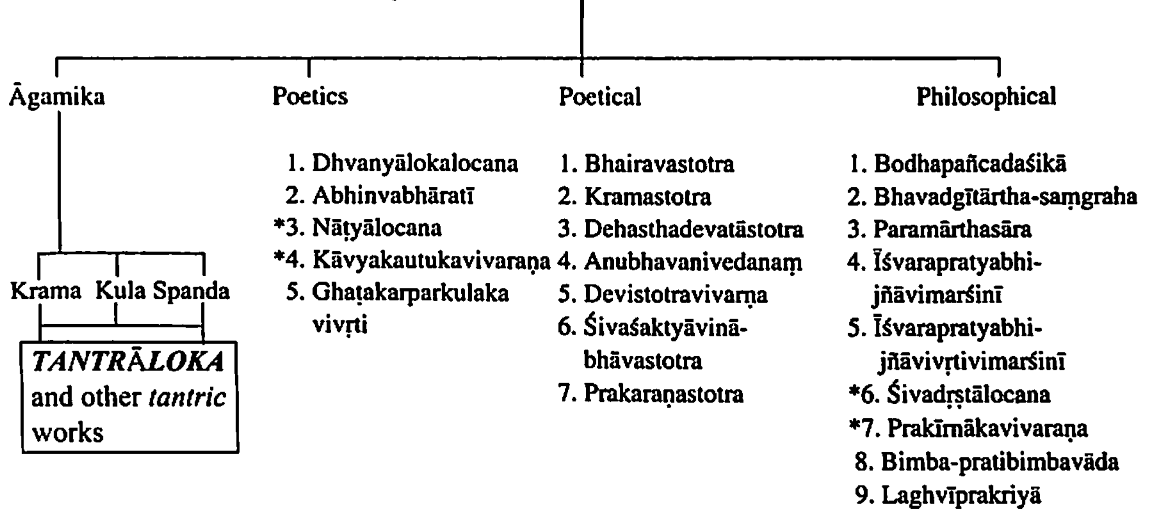
As Kashmir remained for long a major center for both, one may notice some debate and concern between these two systems.

The vast corpus of writings of Abhinava's works (41 major and minor works ascribed to him) can be classified as: *tāntṛka*, philosophical and literary. *Tantrāloka* is an encyclopedic text of *tantra vāṅmaya*.

APPENDIX 2

CLASSIFICATION OF ABHINAVA'S WORKS

(41 major and minor works ascribed to him)



(* Texts not available so far.)

Abhinvagupta is the most authentic *ācārya* of all the tantric cults and his *Tantrāloka* is a representative text of all the branches of Kashmir Śaivism like Spanda, Krama, Kula and also of Pratyabhijñā. These systems share the same ontology and epistemology. However, there is some difference in their rituals. The Kula system appears to be the most ancient among all these four branches, as texts of other three schools refer to the presence of this system. Even many basic and most ancient *āgamas* like *Rudrayāmala*, *Paratrīśikā*, *Mālinivijayottara* bear direct reference to this system. Under the influence of this system Abhinavagupta accepts the thirty seventh principle, i.e., Anuttara *tattva*, the sole substratum of all the thirty six principles.

APPENDIX 3

(A) EIGHTFOLD CLASSIFICATION OF THE SIXTYFOUR BHAIRAVA TANTRA*

I. Bhairavāṣṭaka

1. *Svacchanda*
2. *Caṇḍa*
3. *Bhairava*
4. *Krodha*
5. *Unmattabhairava*
6. *Asitāṅga*
7. *mahocchuṣma*
8. *Kapālīśa*

II. Yāmalāṣṭaka

1. *Brahmayāmala*
2. *Viṣṇuyāmala*
3. *Svacchanda*
4. *Ruru*
5. *Ātharvaṇa*
6. *Rudra*
7. *Vetāla*

**

III. Matākhyāṣṭaka

1. *Rakta*
2. *Lampaṭa*
3. *Mata*
4. *Lakṣmi*
5. *Calikā*
6. *Piṅgalā*
7. *Utphullaka*
8. *Viśvādya*

IV. Maṅgalāṣṭaka

1. *Picubhairavī*
2. *Tantrabhairavī*
3. *Tatabhairavī*
4. *Brāhmikalā*
5. *Vijayā*
6. *Candrākhyā*
7. *Maṅgalā*
8. *Sarvamaṅgalā*

V. *Cakrāṣṭaka*

1. *Mantracakra*
2. *Varṇacakra*
3. *Śakticakra*
4. *Kālacakra*
5. *Vinducakra*
6. *Nādacakra*
7. *Guhyacakra*
8. *Khacakra*

VI. Bahurūpāṣṭaka

1. *Andhaka*
2. *Rurubheda*
3. *Aja*
4. *Mūla*
5. *Varṇabhaṇṭha*
6. *Viḍaṅga*
7. *Javālin*
8. *Mātṛrodana*

VII. Vāgiśāṣṭaka

1. *Bhairavī*
2. *Citrikā*
3. *Haṁsa*
4. *Kadambikā*
5. *Hṛllekā*
6. *Candralekhā*
7. *Vidullekhā*
8. *Vidumat*

VIII. Śikhāṣṭaka

1. *Bhairavaviśākhā*
2. *Vīnā*
3. *Viṇāmaṇi*
4. *Sammoha*
5. *Ḍāmara*
6. *Atharvaka*
7. *Kabandha*
8. *Śiraścheda*

*This list is based on the description provided by Jayaratha in his commentary *Viveka* [*TA* I.18]. For details see R.C. Dwivedi and Navajivan Rastogi (eds.;1987), *TA* Vol. I, pp.284-5. For a bit variant list of sixty-four tantra one may also refer to the commentary of Lakṣamīdhara on *Saundarayalaharī* (verse 31, "*catuḥṣaṣṭyā tantraiḥ sakalamatisandhāyabhuvana...*" .) of Ācārya Śaṅkara.

(B) ***Vāmakeśvara Tantra or Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava Tantra***
(I. 13-20) enumerates the following sixty-four *tantra*:

	Mahāmayāśambara or Mahāmāyā Tantra				
	Yoginījālaśambara or Jālaśambaratantra				
3-10.	Bhairavāṣṭaka (8)	37.	Kāmika	54.	Sarvajñānottara
11-18.	Bahurūpāṣṭaka (8)	38.	kalāvāda	55.	Mahākālī
19-26	Yāmalāṣṭaka (8)	39.	kalāsāra	56.	Mahālakṣmī
27.	Candrajñāna	40.	Kubjikā	57.	Siddhayogīśvarī
28.	Vāsuki	41.	Matottara	58.	Kurūpikā
29.	Mahāsammohana	42.	Vāṇā	59.	Rūpikāmata
30.	Mahocchuṣma	43.	Trotala	60.	Sarvavīra
31.	Mahādeva	44.	Trotalottara	61.	Vimalā
32.	Vātula	45-49.	Pañcāmṛta	62.	Aruṇeśa
33.	Vātulottara	50.	Rūpabheda	63.	Mohinīśa
34.	Hṛdbheda	51.	Bhuta	64.	Viśuddheśvara
35.	Mātṛbheda	52.	Ḍāmara		
36.	Guhya	53.	Kulasāra		

(C) TEN DUALIST TANTRA

According to the details provided by Rājānaka Jayaratha:

1. Kāmika, 2. Yogaja, 3. Cintya, 4. Mukuṭa, 5. Anśmān 6. dīpta, 7. Ajita, 8. Sūkṣma, 9. Sahastra, 10. Sūprabheda.

According to Kiraṇāgama:

1. Kāmika, 2. Yogaja, 3. Cintya, 4. Kāraṇa, 5. Ajita, 6. Dīpta, 7. Sūkṣma, 8. Sahastra, 9. Sūprabheda, 10. Anśumat.

(D) EIGHTEEN DUALIST-CUM-NON-DUALIST TANTRA

1.Vijaya, 2. Niḥśvāsa, 3. Madagīta (in some places it is *prodgīta*), 4. Pārameśvara, 5. Mukhabimba, 6. Siddha, 7. Santāna, 8. Nāsimha, 9. Candrānśu, 10. Vīrabhadra, 11. Āgneya, 12. Śambhū, 13. Visara, 14. Raurava, 15. Vimala, 16. Kiraṇa, 17. Lalita, 18. Saumeya.

Kiaraṇāgama enumerates as follows:

1. Vijaya, 2. Parameśa, 3. Niḥsvāsa, 4. Prodgīta, 4. Mukhabimba, 5. Siddhamata, 6. Santāna, 7. Nārasimha, 8. Candrahāsa, 9. Bhadra, 10. Svāyambhuva, 11. Virakta, 12. Kauravya, 13. Mukuṭa, 14. Kiraṇa, 15. Lalita, 16. Āgneya, 17. Para.

APPENDIX 4

SIXTY-FOUR FINE ARTS

(*lalita kalā* also known as *upavidyā* or ancillary disciplines):

1. *gīta* (song)
2. *vādya* (musical instruments)
3. *nṛtya* (dance)
4. *ālekhyaṁ* (painting/ drawing)
5. *viśeṣakacchedyaṁ* (paper work/ cutting to manifest an artistic form)
6. *taṇḍulakuśumavalivikāra* (decoration with rice flour/*raṅgolī*)
7. *puṣpāstaraṇa* (decoration with flower)
8. *daśanavasanāṅgarāga* (teeth polishing; body massage with fragrant unguent)
9. *maṇibhūmikākarma* (decoration with precious gems)
10. *śayanaracana* (decoration of the bed room)
11. *udakavādyaṁ* (playing *jalataraṅga* and other similar instruments)
12. *udakāghāta* (water play, splashing one another with water)
13. *citrāyoga* (knowledge of the usage of medicine)
14. *mālyagrathanavikalpa* (garland making)
15. *śekharakāpiḍayojana* (adorning hair-lock)
16. *nepathyaprayoga* (adornment with ornaments, costumes, apparels etc.)
17. *karṇapatrabhaṅga* (designs/drawings on the body-limbs)
18. *gandhayukti* (preparation of scents)
19. *bhuṣaṇayojana* (method of wearing ornaments)
20. *indrajāla* (stratagem)
21. *Kaucamāra-prayoga* (erotica as taught by Kucumāra)
22. *hastalāghava* (readiness or skill)
23. *vicitraśākayūṣabhakṣyavikārakriyā* (cookery/cuisine)
24. *pānakarasa-rāgāsavayojana* (preparation of various types of drinks)
25. *sūcivāna karma* (needle-work),
26. *sūtra-krīḍā* (thread-work/various types of plays played with threads/ropes)
27. *vīṇā ḍamaruvādya* (playing string and percussion instruments)
28. *prahelikā* (riddles)
29. *pratimālā* (verse compositions)
30. *durvācakayoga* (recitation of difficult/tongue-twisting verses)
31. *pustaka vācana* (recitation from the books)
32. *nāṭaka-ākhyāikādarśana* (dramaturgy: *nāṭaka/ ākhyāyikā*)
33. *kāvyasamasyāpūrti* (composition of problem-verses)
34. *paṭṭikāvetravānavikalpa* (carpentry/wood objects)

35. *takṣakakarma* (wood-work)
36. *takṣaṇa* (cutting)
37. *vāstuvidyā* (architecture)
38. *suvarṇarūpyaratna parikṣā* (examination of gold, gems and other precious stones)
39. *dhātuvāda* (metallurgy)
40. *maṇirāga jñāna* (colouring of gems)
41. *ākara jñāna* (knowledge of various mines)
42. *vṛkṣāyurvedayoga* (knowledge of herbs and their usages)
43. *meṣakukkuṭalāvakayuddhaviddhi* (methods of bird-fighting)
44. *śuka-sārikā pralāpa* (training of parrots and other domestic birds)
45. *utsādana-samvāhana-keśamardana kauśala* (skill of massage, smearing, hair cutting/caring)
46. *akṣaramuṣṭikā kathana* (interpretation of citra/pictorial poetry)
47. *malecchita vikalpa* (knowledge of dialects/deviant or non-native tongues or language)
48. *deśabhāṣāvijñāna* (knowledge of the regional languages)
49. *pūṣpaśakaṭikā* (adornment of small carts with flowers)
50. *nimitta jñāna* (forecasting)
51. *yantra mātṛkā* (mechanical works)
52. *dhāraṇā mātṛkā* (to expand the ability to hold in mind, memory)
53. *saṁpāṭyaṁ* (group/chorus recitation and singing)
54. *mānasī* (development of thinking faculty)
55. *kāvya kriyā* (poetry)
56. *abhidhāna kośa* (lexicon/vocabulary)
57. *chanda jñāna* (knowledge of prosody)
58. *kriyākalpa* (poetics)
59. *chalita yoga* (mimicry)
60. *vastragopana* (cloth caring/costume)
61. *dyutaviśeṣa* (chess)
62. *ākarṣa kriḍā* (rope-pulling)
63. *bāla krīḍā* (toy making or playing with children/kids)
64. *vainayikī vaijayikī vyāyāma* (politeness, methods of winning over opponents; physical exercise etc.).

*These sixty-four *tantra* or *kala* are in fact the veils of Paramaśiva in which He makes Himself a limited and multiple Being and in this process He manifests this cosmos that appears different from Him. For more details one may see the *Lakṣmīdharā* commentary on Ādi Śaṅkarācārya's *Saundaryalahrī*, verse 31.

There are different enumerations of these 64 art forms in *Śukranītisāra*, *Śrīmadbhāgvad* and Śrībhāsvarājendra's *Svatattvaratnākara*. However, the above list is based on Vātsyāyana's *Kāmasūtra*.

APPENDIX 5

LIST OF MODERN SCHOLARS

1. Swami Lakshmanjoo, Kashmir
2. Swami Muktanand, Maharashrta
3. Prof. Kanti Chandra Pandey, Lucknow
4. Pramahans Mishra 'Hans', Varanasi
5. Swami Krisnanad Sagar, Kheda, Gujarat
6. Prof. Neelkanth Gurtu, Kashmir
7. Prof. Bajinath Pandit, Kashmir
8. Pandit Motilal Shastri
9. Brajvallabh Dwivedi
10. Reva Prasad Dwivedi
11. Dr. Paras Nath Dwivedi, Varanasi
12. Prof Torella (Rome University)
13. Prof. Daniel H.H. Ingalls (Harward University)
14. Tzvetan Todorov
15. Mark S.G. Dyczkowski
16. John R. Dupuche
17. Sharada Devi, Srinagar, Kashmir
18. Janaradan Pathak
19. Rameshwar Jha, Varanasi
20. Jaidev Singh, Varanasi
21. Bettina Baumer, Varansi
22. Prof. R. Gnoli, Rome
23. Prof. Bimal Krishna Matilal, Oxford
24. Andre Padoux
25. R.S. Nagar, University of Delhi
26. Prof. R.C. Dwivedi, Jaipur, Rajasthan
27. Prof. Navajeevan Rastogi, Lucknow
28. Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam
29. Patrick Colm Hogan
30. Marie-Claude Porcher
31. Dr. G.H. Tarlekar
32. Dr. Kamala Dwivedi, Rajasthan University, Jaipur
33. Dr. Bina Aggrawal, Rajsthan University, Jaipur
34. G.T. Deshpande
35. Dr. Hemachandra Chakravati, Varanasi
36. Prof. V. Raghvan
37. Dr. Shyamakant Dwivedi
38. Pandit Mukund Rama Shastri
39. V. Shankaran
40. Ramamurti Tripathi, Ujjain
41. Dr. Ramsagar Tripathy
42. J.C. Chatterji
43. J. Rudrappa
44. Sunther Visuvalingam
45. Rangeshwaranath Madhuresh
46. Dr. Ram Kumar Sharma

APPENDIX 6

ABHINAVAGUPTA'S WORKS

(41 major and minor works in chronological order ascribed to him)

1. Tantrāloka
2. Tantrasāra
3. Tantravaṭadhanikā*
4. Dhvanyālokalocana
5. Abhinavabhāratī
6. Bhagavadgītārthasaṁgraha
7. Paramārthasāra
8. Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī
9. Bodhapañcadaśikā
10. Parātrīśikāvivṛti/vivaraṇa
11. Mālinīvijayavārttika (laghvīvimaśinī)
12. Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtivimarśinī (vṛhatīvimarśinī)
13. Kramastotra
14. Dehasthadevatācakrastotra
15. Bhairavastotra
16. Paramārthadvādaśikā*
17. Anubhavanivedanaṁ
18. Paramārthacarcā
19. Mahopadeśaviṁśaytīkā
20. Anuttaraśatikā/Anuttarāṣṭiā
21. Tantroccaya
22. Ghaṭakarparkulakavivṛti
23. Kramakeli*
24. Śivadṛṣṭyālocana*
25. Pūrvapañcikā
26. Padārthapraveśanirṇayaṭīkā*
27. Prakīrṇakavivaraṇa* (commentary on the third *kāṇḍa* of Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya*)
28. Prakaraṇavivaraṇa*
29. Kāvyakautukavivaraṇa*
30. Kathāmukhaṭīkā*
31. Laghvīprakriyā*
32. Bedavādavidāraṇa*
33. Devistotravivaraṇa
34. Tattvādhvaprakāśikā*
35. Śiva-śaktyāvinābhāvastotra*
36. Bimba-pratibimbavāda
37. Paramārthasaṅgraha*
38. Anuttaraśataka*
39. Prakaraṇastotra*
40. Nāṭyālocana*
41. Anuttaratattvavimarśinī*

*Texts not available so far.

The chronology is based on the internal textual evidences.

Prof. K.C. Pandey provides three more texts ascribed to Abhinavagupta: *Pururava Vicāra, Prayatnapañcāśikā* and *Anuttaratattvavimarśinīvṛtti.*

APPENDIX 7

TEACHERS OF ABHINAVAGUPTA

	Teachers	**Disciplines**
1.	Narasiṁhagupta (His father; also known as Cukhalaka) [*Tantrāloka* XXXVII.58]	Grammar, literature and logic.
2.	Vāmanātha Āmardaka or [*Tantrāloka* XXXVII.6}	Dualist Śaiva Philosophy (School of Ānanda)
3.	Bhūtirāja and his son (Helārāja) [*Tantrāloka*. I.9; XXXVII.60]	Dualist-cum-non-dualist Tantra; Philosophy of grammar/language
4.	Lakṣamaṇagupta [*Tantrāloka* I.10-11; XXXVII.61; *IPV* I.1-4]	Tantra *prakriyā* (Krama, Trika and Pratyabhijñā Philosophy)
5.	Bhaṭṭa Indurāja [*Dhvanyāloka Locana*. Uddyota I. Second verse]	*Dhvani* Theory; *Bhāgavadgitā*
6.	Bhaṭṭatauta [*Abhnavabhāratī* Under *Nāṭyaśāstra* I.1 and at several places in Ch. 6 of *Nāṭyasāstra*]	*Nāṭyaśāstra*
7.	Śambhunātha	Kaulāgama (Ardha-Trayambaka school of non-dualism and *Śrī Pūrvaśāstra*; main inspiration behind *Tantrāloka*) [*Tantrāloka*. XXXVII.61, 78]

Apart from these prominent teachers, Abhinavagupta names thirteen more of his teachers in a verse:

śrīcandraśarmabhavabhaktivilāsayogānandābhinandaśivaśaktivicitranāthāḥ/
anye'pi dharamaśivavāmanakodbhaṭaśrībhūteśabhāskaramukhapramukhā mahāntaḥ//

[*Tantrāloka*. XXXVII. 62]

Śrīcandra Śarma	
Bhava (or Bhavabhūti ?)	
Yogānanda	
Abhinanda	
Śivaśakti	
Vicitranātha	
Dharmaśiva [*Tantrāloka* XXI.50-55]	*Parokṣadikṣā* (indirect initiation)
Vāmanaka (or Vāmanadatta ?) author of *Saṁvitprakāśa*.	Upāyabheda (various means of knowledge of Paramaśiva without affecting the integrity of Absolute Consciousness)

Udbhaṭa (different from the famous poetician who was in the court of King Jayāpīḍa 779-813 AD)	Krama Tradition
Śrībhūtīśa	
Bhāskara [*Tantrāloka*. XXXVII.62]	*Śivaśūtra* and Spanda school
Aniruddha [*Tantrāloka* (*Viveka*) VIII.433-4]	Mataṅga Āgama

APPENDIX 8

Sources of Texts of Kashmir:

Saraswati Mahal Library, Tanjaur
Samapurnananda Sanskrit University Library, Varanasi
Adyar Library, Govt. Oriental Library, Madras University Library, Cennai
French Research Institute, Pondicherry
Manuscript Collection, Patan
Ishwara Ashrama Trust, Delhi and Srinagar
Kashmir University, Srinagar
Jammu University – Mrs. Veena Gupta
Indira Gandhi National Centre for Art, New Delhi
Ranavir Institute, Jammu

APPENDIX 9



Śrī Abhinavaguptapādācārya (940-1015) teaching

Sanskrit text of Madhurāja Yogin

द्राक्षारामस्य मध्ये स्फटिकमणिमये मण्डपे चित्ररम्ये, पुष्पस्रग्धूपदीपैर्वहलपरिमले चर्चिते चन्दनाद्यैः ।
वाद्यैर्गीतैः सनृत्यैः सततमुखरिते योगिनीसिद्धसंघै–राकीर्णे स्वर्णपीठे मृदुतलिमतले बद्धमुक्तावितane ॥१॥
आसीनः क्षेमराजप्रभृतिभिरखिलैः सेवितः शिष्यवर्गैः, पादोपान्ते निषण्णैरवहितहृदयैरुक्तमुक्तं लिखद्भिः ।
द्वाभ्यां पार्श्वस्थिताभ्यां शिवरसकरकं पूर्णताम्बूलपेटीं, दूतीभ्यां विभ्रतीभ्यामपरकरलसन्मातुलिङ्गोत्पलाभ्याम् ॥२॥
आनन्दान्दोलिताक्षः स्फुटकृततिलको भस्मना भालमध्ये, रुद्राक्षोल्लासकर्णः कलितकचभरो मालया लम्बकूर्चः ।
रक्ताङ्गो यक्षपङ्कोल्लसदसितगलो लम्बमुकोपवीतः, क्षौमं वासो वसानः शशिकरधवलं वीरयोगासनस्थः ॥३॥
जन्वासक्तैकहस्तः स्फुटपरमशिवज्ञानमुद्राक्षसूत्रो, वामश्रीपाणिपद्मस्फुरितनखमुखैर्वादयन्नादवीणाम् ।
श्रीकण्ठेशावतारः परमकरुणया प्राप्तकश्मीरदेशः, श्रीमान्नः पातु साक्षादभिनववपुषा दक्षिणामूर्तिदेवः ॥४॥

English Translation of Sanskrit Verse

May glorious god Dakṣiṇāmūurti in the form of Abhinava, who is an incarnation of Śrīkaṇṭha and has come to Kashmir out of deep compassion, protect us. His eyes are rolling with spiritual bliss. The centre of his forehead is clearly marked with three lines, made with ashes. His ears look beautiful with Rudrākṣa. His luxuriant hair is tied with a garland of flowers. His beard is long. His body is rosy. His neck, black because of its being besmeared with paste of camphor, musk, sandal, saffron etc., looks splendid. His long sacred thread

(Yajñopavīta) is left loose. He is dressed in silk-cloth, white like the rays of the moon, and is sitting in the Yogic posture, called Vīra, on a soft cushion over a throne of gold with a canopy, decked with strings of pearls, in an open hall, – full of crystals, beautified with paintings, smelling extremely sweet on account of garlands of flowers, incense and lamps, perfumed with sandal etc., constantly resonant with vocal and instrumental music and dance and crowded with female ascetics and saints of recognized spiritual power, – in the centre of a garden of grapes. He is attended by all his pupils, such as Kṣemarāja, who are sitting, with their minds concentrated, at his feet and are writing down all that he says, and by two female messengers (Dūtīs), who are standing at the sides, each with a jar, full of water, distilled from the grain kept socked in water for three nights, and a box, full of beetles, in the right hand and a fruit of citron and a lotus in the left. His right hand, wearing the rosary of Rudrākṣa, is resting on the thigh and his fingres are in the position indicative of the grasp of the Ultimate Reality. And he is playing upon the Vīṇā, which is capable of producing original musical sound (Nāda), with the tip of nail of his lotus-like left hand.

CHAPTER 4

Social Structure and Cultural Identity of Kashmiri Pandits

S. S. Toshkhani

To write about the characteristic features of Kashmiri Pandit social and cultural life at a time when the turmoil in Kashmir has led to their *en masse* displacement from their natural habitat and ecological setting would be to venture too far outside the context of the prevailing reality. Looking at their predicament of being dispersed and dispossessed with an uncertain fate staring them in the eye, it would perhaps be more relevant to study the changes that the impact of their exodus has brought about in the traditional patterns of their way of life. For, even as they are struggling to come to terms with the trauma of their displacement and trying to adapt themselves to unfamiliar geo-physical and social environment, they are faced with the looming threat of extinction as a collective ethnic entity. Now they are trying to save their soul – the essence of what constitutes their identity. And it is with this essence that we are concerned in this paper.

With Islamic extremism holding sway in the Kashmir Valley and the Pandits cut off because of genocidal attacks from their moorings in the geo-cultural terrain that has shaped their social behaviour and defined their identity, the tradition of "tolerance" and "religious harmony" between Kashmiri Muslims and Hindus suffered a great setback. As such the overarching ideological framework, euphemistically called *Kashmiriat*, which seeks to accommodate and synthesize the psychological dispositions, religious beliefs, social and moral attitudes and cultural values of diverse communities in the Valley, though repeated in public rhetoric, is not rooted on the ground. It would, therefore, be

appropriate to say that Muslims and Hindus in Kashmir have lived side by side with "their own distinctive cultural traits, social structure, and historical experience", to use the words of the eminent sociologist T.N. Madan.[1] As for the Kashmiri Pandits, as the Hindus of Kashmir are generally called, it has been a co-existence accepted by them because of compulsions of history, lack of alternatives, and a deep attachment for their native soil. Historically speaking, Kashmiri Pandits derived their distinctive value and belief systems from the altruistic and compassionate doctrines of Mahayana Buddhism which seeks liberation for all living beings, the life-affirmative philosophy of non-dual Kashmir Shaivism which rejects the otherness of God and perceives the ultimate reality in terms of an indivisible consciousness vibrating in every atom of the universe and the Vaishnava doctrine of man's emotional relationship with God sought to be established through devotional love. What is more significant, osmosis of ideas and concepts between these forms of religious beliefs became a process that helped the Pandits to acquire a mature cultural poise and influenced their thinking and behaviour.

In reality, the Kashmiri Pandits have their own distinctive way of living characterized not just by modes of worship but also by customs, life-cycle rituals, behaviourial patterns, attitudes, dress and ornaments, festivals, food habits, linguistic dialect, forms of greetings, blessings and expression of condolences and above all their adherence to the essential core of Indian cultural and intellectual and artistic traditions, and this is what sets them apart from other communities in Kashmir. Therefore, to have a valid view of the Pandit social order it would make more sense if we approach it from a civilizational standpoint and explore the traditional base on which its foundations are laid.

Kashmiri Pandits are an ancient and the indigenous people of Kashmir, who have given the Valley its own creation myth and its name. They are legatees of a rich culture that has deep roots in time and traditions going more than five thousand years back as indicated by the era adopted by them for their *Saptrishi* calendar running currently into its 5084th year. Kashmiri Pandits living across the world, continue to follow the *Saptrishi* calendar, as per their almanac, till today. More significantly they have made immense contributions in the fields of philosophy, theology, aesthetics, art and architecture, grammar, medicine, language and literature, making Kashmir the celebrated centre of Sanskrit learning and cultural and intellectual enterprise that it was for a prolonged period in the past. Their natural gravitation towards cultivation of cerebral graces and passion for achievement of excellence in learning which they prized above every thing else earned them world wide attention and encomium. Many of the seminal ideas and concepts that have shaped the Indian mind over the centuries can be without doubt attributed to them.

This profile of theirs is congruous with the picture of their social and cultural life as portrayed in the *Nilamata Purana*, a sixth century Sanskrit text which can be regarded as a virtual encyclopaedia of civilizational development in early Kashmir. It records how

after the Sage Kashyapa reclaimed the Valley by draining out the waters of the primordial lake Satisar, the Nagas, Aryans, Pishachas and other racial groups mixed and commingled on the banks of the river Vitasta that runs crisscross through it mothering a unique civilization. The *Nilamata Purana* is a presentation of various traits of the social, religious and cultural life of the people who populated this Valley in those early dawns of pre-history, woven together into a fascinating fabric. On its pages we come across a community of Brahmins who immigrated from "Aryadesha", and settled there permanently, following the trails of Chandradeva, after following for a long period of time the practice of sojourning there for just six months and leaving before the arrival of winter. It is most probable that many among them belonged originally to the Saraswati Valley and migrated to Kashmir after the river dried up and vanished, if the strong and persistent tradition among Kashmiri Pandits of being Saraswat Brahmins is to be believed. The large number of words of Vedic origin present in the vocabulary of the Kashmiri language seems to confirm it. From accounts given in not just the *Nilamata* but also the *Rajatarangini* and other early sources, they appear to have occupied a high profile in the society of the times for their intellectual attainments, emerging as a people "engaged in self-study, contemplation, performance of sacrifice, penance and the study of the Vedas and *Vedāngas*".[2] They enjoyed a high degree of respect from other social groups for being *itihāsavida* and *kalāvida* or "knowers of history and connoisseurs of art" and were also supposed to have a thorough grounding in the six schools of philosophy, astrology and astronomy, grammar, prosody, logic and medicine besides the religious texts. They were also required to live an austere life and adhere to high moral standards. Of course some of them functioned as priests also attending to performance of religious ceremonies and rituals for their patrons or the *yajamānas* who included those from their own social group, but that did not preclude them from holding a prominent position in the society as an intellectual and scholarly class.

It is not as though no other castes existed among Hindus in ancient Kashmir, but there is difference of opinion whether they belonged to the traditional four *varnas* viz., Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. Dr. S.C. Ray is of the view that there were no intermediary castes, not even the Shudras. "Though the conception of population as consisting of the four traditional castes was not altogether unknown", he writes, "there was no such caste as Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra in early Kashmir."[3] Besides the Brahmins, who according to him were "definitely the more privileged and honoured caste", he mentions Nishadas, Kiratas, Dombas, Svapakas and Chandalas as lower castes. The view, however, appears to be only partially true for though the Nishadas, Kiratas, Dombas etc. were undoubtedly there, the Kshatriyas and Vaishyas were not altogether absent from the social order. The *Nilamata* mentions the functions of each of the four traditional castes and says that representatives of all the four social groups participated

in the king's coronation. The *Rajatarangini* too makes specific references to Kshatriyas as well as Vaishyas, though more indirectly in case of the latter as an emergent rich and prosperous merchant class. Damodargupta's reference to *shreshthin* and *vanikas* in his *Kuttanimatam* also indicates the existence of a rich and prosperous trading community whose members patronized theatre. Kashmir's trade and commercial ties with the neighbouring regions appear to have been very strong right from the Kushana period and by the time of the Karkotas an extensive export market was available for Kashmiri goods throughout Asia. As for the lower castes, Nishadas were the boats people, Kiratas were a forest dwelling tribe who lived by hunting and animal trapping, the Dombas too were huntsmen and also did menial jobs while the Chandalas were fierce fighters acting as bravos and also as executioners. Dr. S.C. Ray stops short of calling them Shudras, though he leaves us in no doubt about their low status in the social order.

However, the division of early Kashmiri society into the four castes and their sub-castes was only notional. In actual practice the caste system in Kashmir was never rigid and relations between various social groups were not characterized by any lack of interaction or communication. As we learn from the *Kathasaritsagara* and other Sanskrit literary works of the early mediaeval period, intermarriages between various castes were not very uncommon. *Rajatarangini* gives the story of a Domba singer Ranga whose beautiful daughters gave a performance at the court of King Chakravarman, one of whom he made his chief queen. Consequently, Dombas became favourites of the king and wielded much influence at his court as councilors. Kalhana also tells us how a low caste *āramika* or vegetable grower rose to become a high ranking *kāyastha* or state official.

More than caste, society in early Kashmir was actually organized along occupational or economic lines "on the basis of three principal methods of production", viz., agriculture, industry and trade. While agricultural and trading communities were very important sections of the society from the socio-economic point of view, the official or administrative class, known by the general cover term Kayastha, also wielded considerable power. Kayasthas or the king's officials could be drawn from any caste or class, including Brahmins, and did not denote any particular caste, as we come to know from Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* and Kshemendra's works.

Reverting to Kashmiri Pandits, as Brahmins of Kashmir are generally known, we can safely say that they were given a prominent place in the society not due to the consideration of caste hierarchy alone but also because of their intellectual proclivities and scholastic bent of mind. They got this appellation much before the Mughal emperors Shah Jahan or Aurangzeb, who are generally believed to have used it first, appeared on the scene. Taranath, the noted Tibetan historian of Buddhism repeatedly refers to Kashmiri monk scholars, who contributed in such a major way to the diffusion of Buddhism to Tibet, China, Central Asia and other East Asian countries, translating and interpreting important

Buddhist texts, as "Kashmiri Panditas" and "Brahmins". Locally, Kashmiri Pandits are known as Bhattas, *bhatta* being a term derived from Sanskrit *bhartri* or *bhattāchārya* meaning a learned man – the same as the word Pandit. In his second *Rajatarangini*, Jonaraja describes the sad plight of the Pandits when they, persecuted by Sikandar Butshikan, raised the heartrending cries of *Na Bhatto'ham! Na Bhatto'ham!* (I am not a Bhatta! I am not a Bhatta!).

Today almost all native Hindus of Kashmir are *Bhattas* or Kashmiri Pandits consisting of 199 exogamous *gotras* or clans and belonging to the *Kāthaka* redaction of the *Krishna Yajurveda*. Their *āchāra* or ritual conduct is governed mainly by the *Laugākshī Grihyasūtra* or the aphoristic ordainments of the Sage Laugākshī regarding domestic rituals, together with some Purānic and Tāntric ritual elements. There is also a small number among the Kashmiri Hindus of an endogamous category known as *Buhury* or the Bohras who are generally grocers and confectioners and *halwāīs*. According to Walter Lawrence they basically belong to a trading class of Punjabi Khatri origin. However, with the passage of time they came closer to the urban *Bhattas*, acquiring a life style not much different from that of the latter. One can, therefore, safely categorize the Hindus of Kashmir as belonging to only the Brahminical class of *Bhattas*. What happened to the other classes, or castes if you like to call them so, and how the Pandits came to be reduced so drastically in numbers that they became a small minority of the overall population of the Kashmir Valley is not difficult to know for we have a number of contemporary chronicles, both Sanskrit and Persian, that throw enough light on it.

It may, however, be said that whatever their numbers, the Pandits of today retain most of the traits of character that the historical texts show their ancestors to have possessed. They remain a community of intelligent people with a natural flair for learning and scholarship, refined aesthetical tastes and sophistication in behaviour and attitude. Their talents in the fields of literature, art, education etc. have been generally recognized along with their peaceful disposition which they have imbibed from the beautiful natural surroundings of their native land.

What is unique about the social organization of Kashmiri Pandits is that it consists mainly of the Brahmin caste even though superficially divided into two (erstwhile) sub-castes with respective designations of *karkun* or 'civil servants' and *gor* or the priestly class – erstwhile because their recent exodus has almost completely rendered these divisions irrelevant. Writing in the context of his study of cultural identities in rural Kashmir T. N. Madan observes: "To the best of my knowledge, this is a social situation unparalleled in any other cultural region of the sub-continent.... The first question that must be answered is, how has this peculiar situation arisen?"[4]

To find out what happened, we may have to delve a little deep into history and look for reasons in the sequence of events that took place in the wake of the advent of Islam

in the Kashmir Valley. Though Islam came to Kashmir in the 14th century with its ideology and beliefs, its theology and dogmas, its laws and codes of conduct, its lore and legends, some Muslims had settled here long before that. There are references in the *Rajatarangini* to the presence of Turkic Muslim soldiers in the army of King Harsha (1089-1111) and the employment of Turkic mercenaries by Bhikhshacahra (1120-21) against Sussala. Earlier, attempts by Hisham-bin-Amru'l-Taghlibi, the Arab governor of Sindh, and Mahmud Ghazanavi (998-1030) to invade Kashmir had ended in failure. But it was only when Rinchan, a Buddhist fugitive from Ladakh, and Shah Mir, an adventurer from Swat converged on Kashmir and sought refuge there during the reign of King Sahadeva (1301-20) and confabulated with Sayyid Sharafu'd-Din alias Bulbul Shah, who had arrived earlier, that the Valley came under Muslim rule. Sahadeva's greatest folly was not only to have granted asylum but also having given away whole villages as estates to these outsiders without ascertaining their bona fides. Rinchan sought and got employment under his commander-in-chief Ramachandra. But they all repaid the unsuspecting king's benevolence with treachery, subversion and perfidy, waiting for an opportune time to strike. This they got when Dulacha also called Zulachu or Dulachu, a Turkic-Mongol chieftain, invaded Kashmir at the head of a huge army which included Turks and Tajiks. Sahadeva panicked and fled to the neighbouring region of Kishtwar, leaving his hapless subjects to the mercy of the ruthless invaders. Zulju ordered a massacre and his soldiers decimated thousands of people, took thousands as slaves, burnt down villages, plundered towns and destroyed standing crops. When he left after devastating the Valley for eight months, utter chaos reigned and a famine of terrible dimensions ensued causing unprecedented misery to the starving survivors.

Zulju's devastating invasion created conditions of total anarchy which let Kashmir slip into Muslim hands with the scheming Rinchan finding in it the best opportunity to grab power. The *Baharistan-i-Shahi*[5] tells us how Rinchan in an act of revolting treachery smuggled men and weapons inside the fort of his master Ramchandra in the guise of merchants, killing him and his men most brutally and taking his family as prisoners. Then marrying his daughter Kota Rani, he usurped the throne.

Rinchan's conversion to Islam is a turning point in Kashmir's history and needs to be written about in some detail. It is said that after grabbing power he expressed the desire to convert to Hinduism but the Shaiva guru Devaswami ruled out his admission into the Hindu fold. But this does not seem to be convincing, for being the king, Rinchan could have approached any other Brahmin for converting to Hinduism, as Prof. A.Q. Rafiqi has pointed out. Rinchan's conversion seems to have been manipulated by Shah Mir himself. It was he who told Rinchan that he could adopt the religion of the person he saw first in the morning. And who else but Sharafu'd-Din Bulbul Shah could have been that person for Shah Mir had so plotted the whole thing that he was seen offering

namaz in front of the king's palace. Rinchan thus converted to Bulbul Shah's faith and became Kashmir's first Muslim king in 1320 AD under the Islamic name of Sadru'd-Din. He, however, did not last long and was murdered in 1323 AD.

Once again Kashmir passed into Hindu hands when Kota Rani got Sahadeva's cousin Udyandeva installed as the king and herself became his queen. The scheming Shah Mir had to acquiesce in it and wait for his chance till another invader Achala attacked Kashmir. Udyandeva fled the place while Shah Mir made himself popular by helping Kota ward off the aggression. He then acted to realize his ambition of seizing power for himself and surprised Kota Rani by staging a palace coup against her. It is said that he asked Kota to be his queen, but when she entered the bridal chamber she committed suicide. Shah Mir's success in laying a firm foundation of Muslim rule in Kashmir changed the entire basis of political power and triggered off developments that had a devastating effect on the social structure of the Kashmiri Pandit community, threatening their whole way of life and sowing the seeds of perpetual trouble for them. Kashmir's transition to Islam, however, received a great impetus with the arrival of Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani on the scene in 1381 AD along with a large retinue of his followers. Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani was a fugitive from the wrath of Timur who was persecuting the Sayyids in Iran and parts of Central Asia for being inimical to his rule.

The first thing that Hamadani, regarded as the greatest of the Islamic missionaries to have visited the Valley, did was to interfere in all aspects of state affairs as well as personal affairs of the Sultan, asking the ruler to act according to the tenets of Islam, He admonished Sultan Qutubu'd-Din for having married two blood sisters and for dressing after the fashion of the Hindus against the tenets of Islamic law.[6] The Sultan immediately tried to make amends by divorcing one of the two wives and abandoning the Hindu costume to wear Muslim dress. Getting the Hindu temple of Kalishri demolished and setting up on its base a hospice to preach Islam in the quarter in Srinagar now known as Khanaqah-i-Maula, Sayyid Ali Hamadani set out for different parts of the Valley on a frenzied mission of drawing as many adherents to his faith as possible. Not satisfied with the response to the proselytizing drive, he left Kashmir as a disappointed man, but not before making the king conscious of his duties as a Muslim ruler. He left for Sultan Qutubu'd-Din his mandate in the shape of a book named *Zakhirat-ul-Mulk*[7] which makes it imperative for every Muslim ruler to adopt the Covenant of Caliph Omar as a matter of state policy in dealing with his non-Muslim subjects (*zimmis*). The book lists some twenty most discriminatory and humiliating rules for the non-Muslims to follow with absolute obedience, default in any single case being punishable with death. This development spelt disaster for the Pandit community as it placed them under the obligation of having to follow regulations of an alien religious law in their own land. The directions given in Sayyid Hamadani's book called for forbidding the non-Muslims to construct any

new places of worship or to execute repairs on any existing ones that may fall to ruin. The non-Muslims were enjoined upon to readily allow the entry of any Muslim in their temples and treat him as a guest of honour; they were to honour Muslims and leave their assembly wherever Muslims would enter the premises. Sayyid Hamadani's regulations also imposed a dress code upon the Pandits, asking them to wear clothes that would distinguish them from Muslims. These and other discriminatory regulations were to become imperative for the non-Muslims to follow throughout the Muslim rule in Kashmir.

The implementation of these injunctions was made even more stringent by Sayyid Ali's son Sayyid Muhammad Hamadani who came to Kashmir in the time of Sultan Sikandar (1389-1413), notoriously known as *butshikan* or the iconoclast. Working under the influence of the Sayyid, Sikandar was helped in his determined drive for extermination of the native Hindus and their religious practices by his general, Malik Saifu'd-Din, a neo-convert. The two worked in tandem and razed numerous Hindu temples to the ground and destroyed as many idols as possible, giving the Hindus three options: conversion to Islam, banishment and death. Thousands were forcibly converted to Islam, thousands massacred for remaining in their faith, while an unknown number fled the Valley to escape conversion or persecution. Those who stayed back and resisted conversion were not allowed to wear the *tika* mark, were prevented from following their religious practices and made to pay *jaziya* (tax) for daring to adhere to their own faith.[8] This was how Pandits continued to suffer throughout at the hands of bigoted Muslim rulers with some periods of remission. An unrelenting policy of proselytizing and persecution made a bulk of medieval Kashmiri society change its identity from Hindu and Buddhist to an Islamic one.

The most notable Muslim king who ruled over Kashmir was Zainu'l-Abidin, remembered as Budshah or the 'Great King' for the peace and prosperity he brought to the kingdom and the enlightened policy of religious tolerance and harmony he followed. He encouraged the Pandits who had fled from Kashmir to return, allowed them to practice their religion, rebuild their places of worship destroyed during the rule of his own father Sikandar and offered the talented among them high positions in his administration. In fact this he did also because he needed the Brahmins to run the administration which was in shambles because of their exodus. Zainu'l-Abidin's attempt to rehabilitate the *Bhattas* also resulted in a bizarre division among them with the repatriated Brahmins being called *malamasis* and those who had stayed back being called *banamasis*. Although these appellations did not involve social disability for anyone, they did generate some social taboos. What changed the entire social organization of the Pandits, however, was Zainu'l-Abidin's declaration of Persian as the court language. This led to a vertical division of the Pandit society into two sections – those who would study Persian and take up jobs in the administration and those who would take care of the traditional Sanskrit scholarship

and ensure performance of rituals and religious ceremonies. The former were called *karkuns* for joining government services and the latter designated *bhasha bhattas* for keeping the study of *bhasha* or Sanskrit and the religious lore and traditions associated with it alive. An arrangement was reached about who would be asked to take up which role and it was decided that a daughter's son would be assigned the responsibility of studying Sanskrit and administering "to the spiritual and religious needs of his mother's natal family".

Though the *Bhasha Bhattas* were regarded as the privileged and respected class in the beginning, the arrangement soon degenerated into a kind of perverted social hierarchy and the *Karkuns* "arrogated to themselves the superior status". The former were treated as the inferior category for being dependent on the latter for economic sustenance and came to be called *gor* – a term of social contempt although derived from the Sanskrit *guru* or preceptor.

Meanwhile, the atrocities on the Brahmins who resisted conversion continued with every Muslim ruler following Sikandar in not going beyond offering the three choices of conversion, exile or death. The process of transforming the Kashmiri society comprising mainly of Hindu-Bhattas into a society dominated by believers in Islam went on, except that there were brief periods of remission in terms of coercion. Religious persecution of the Pandits continued to be the order of the day as the mix of religion and politics became more and more dangerous in every successive period. And if the horrors unleashed by Sikandar Butshikan on them evoked images of hell, the tyranny of Shia bigots like Musa Raina, Shamsu'd-Din and Kaji Chak proved to be even worse. The Pandits suffered the savagery of the Shia missionary Shamsu'd-Din Araki and his collaborator Musa Raina, the Prime minister of Sultan Fateh Shah (1506-16), when the duo went on about implementing their mission of conversion and destruction of Hindu religious structures. According to the *Baharistan-i-Shahi* they would let loose hordes of so-called Sufis and dervishes (*sufian va darveshan*) to torture and terrorize the Hindus into submission and to convert them to Islam. Giving a contemporary account the Persian chronicle says that "with the support and authority of Malik Musa Raina", Shamsu'd-Din Aaraki undertook "a wholesale destruction of all ... idol houses as well as the total ruination of the very foundation of infidelity and disbelief". With the "elaborate arrangements" made by Musa Raina, it reveals, "twenty four thousand families of "staunch infidels and stubborn heretics" were converted to the Islamic faith by force and compulsion *(qahran va jabran)*.[9] When the Chaks came to power, the plight of Hindus became extremely pitiable with Kaji Chak butchering hundreds of them everyday for not accepting Islam as their only faith.

The Pandits experienced a brief period of respite when Akbar brought Kashmir under Mughal rule and treated them with sympathy, but their misfortunes and miseries kept on mounting under the later Mughals till they reached the highest point during

Afghan rule. In Aurangzeb's time atrocities assumed such proportions and things worsened to such an extent that the Pandits had to petition Guru Teg Bahadur for help – and this led to the Guru's tragic martyrdom. Mughal *subedars* (governors) like Muhata Khan imposed a strict dress code on them so that they could be easily identified and harassed and plundered. The rapacious Afghan governors persecuted the Pandits in such barbarous ways as drowning them alive in the Dal Lake, choking them with smoke and imposing unbearable religious taxes on them,[10] not to speak of orgies of murder, rape, arson and loot to coerce them to accept Islam. Women were particularly targeted for assault and brides abducted during their weddings, with the result that the Pandits started marrying their daughters in their early childhood. Other social problems also followed as women had to be kept in isolation at home and illiteracy was forced upon them.

The loot and plunder by the Afghans reduced the Pandits to extreme poverty and the holocausts decimated their population to such an extent that it is said that only eleven families survived. The Pandits of today are believed to have descended from them. When atrocities made survival look like impossible, a Kashmri Pandit named Birbaljoo Dhar pleaded with Maharaja Ranjit Singh to send the Sikh army to take over in Kashmir. When the Valley passed into the hands of the Dogra rulers, the Pandits showed unusual resilience and putting their past behind them tried to rebuild their world without facing many threats of physical or cultural extinction.

Viewed in this perspective, the present predicament of the community appears to be a throwback to the dark and dismal times of Muslim rule; though at no time in history did the Pandits have to leave Kashmir almost to the last man as they have done today. Cut off entirely from their moorings in Kashmir and forced to live in an unfamiliar linguistic and cultural environment, they find the patterns of their life as a distinct ethnic entity badly disrupted and their social fabric torn asunder. Still they are trying to hold on tenaciously to their customs, culture, sensibilities and civilizational memories. However, they cannot be said to be immune to changes that are bound to occur to a people in a state of dispersion despite desperate attempts to preserve identifiable cultural markers.

There has, however, been one positive upshot of the otherwise totally tragic dispersal of the Kashmiri Pandits – suddenly the dichotomy of the *Karkun* and *Gor* categories has disappeared. Even otherwise the *Gors* or members of the priestly class were shunning their traditional calling and taking to different occupations, the process having begun much before the exodus. They were going for jobs not only as teachers but in all spheres of economic endeavour to be on par with their erstwhile patrons whose disdainful treatment they were finding impossible to tolerate. Earlier the *Gors* held the *Karkuns* as their patrons or *yajamans* as the latter paid them their customary fees in cash or kind for the ritual services they rendered. Every *Gor* household had a clientele fixed on a hereditary basis of *Karkun* households and the fees or *dakshina* as it is called depended entirely on

the disposition of the *Karkun* client. The services included performance of religious rites and worship rituals, preparation of horoscopes and almanacs, providing information about auspicious timings and so on. The system had assumed a somewhat hierarchical character over the centuries since it was introduced in the time of Zainul Abidin. It is now cracking with priest-craft holding no attraction for the younger generation of the *Gors* who have taken to other avenues of employment. This has led to a severe shortage of functional experts for performing of religious rites and ceremonies.

The fundamental core of the Kashmiri Pandit ritual system, it may be pointed out, is similar to that prevailing among other Hindu communities in India. But there are some significant variations, modifications and improvisations prompted by *deshachara* or regional customs and practices which give the Kashmiri Pandit rituals their peculiarity and particularity. Although derived from Vedic and Agamic sources basically and therefore of a pan-Hindu nature, in several cases the ritual behaviour of the community can be traced to elements mainly of indigenous origin. As things stand today, of the sixteen standard *samskaras* or life-cycle rituals only the most essential ones like *mekhal* or the sacred thread investiture, *nethar* or marriage and *antyeshti* and *shraddha* or funerary and post-funerary rites are performed, the rest being generally regarded as dispensable. Apart from conditions created by the exodus and dearth of performing priests, exigencies of modern life and other socio-economic factors are also responsible for this situation.

Among the life-cycle rituals or passage of time rites, starting with the birth of a child or rather its conception, *shrana sondar, kahnethar* and *zarakasai*, corresponding to *jatakarma, namakarana* and *chudakarana samskaras* respectively, are still performed by a few people though not with the same enthusiasm as could be witnessed some years back. *Shrana sondar* is the purification bath ritually given after the sixth day of delivery to the mother and new-born babe with hot water made fragrant with medicinal herbs. After the bath, female relatives and neighbourhood ladies pass pieces of ignited birch-bark around the head of the child singing a song with the refrain *shokh ta panasund*. It is not clear as to what these words exactly mean but some people interpret the word *panasund* as being a distortion of the Sanskrit *punahsantu* meaning "May you have (children) again." Perhaps the pieces of birch-bark were passed around the infant's head to ward off evil spirits as it was supposed to be highly vulnerable to their influence.

To be performed on the eleventh day after birth, *kahnethar* of a child is a purification ceremony that can be called a kind of blend of *jatakarma* and *namkarana* or the naming ceremony. The eleventh day is chosen because it is the day when the period of pollution of the newly become mother due to child birth is supposed to expire, but it is not essential that the ceremony should be held only on that day. It can be performed on any date regarded astrologically auspicious even after the prescribed day. A gold ornament, preferably a ring, is dipped in clarified butter kept in a bronze vessel and the child is fed

the butter scooped by it amidst chanting of benedictory mantras and made to wear the ring around its neck. *Kahnethar* ceremonies end with a feast given to the presiding priest and other guests, indicating that it has become more of a social function. In the name-giving ceremony which may follow it, the child is given a name having an initial letter decided after the *nakshatra* or the constellation, each letter of the Sanskrit alphabet supposed to preside over one constellation or other. Today *kahnethar* is no longer considered to be an essential *samskara* and many Pandit families skip it over.

Zarakasai or the first tonsure of the neophyte corresponding to *chudakarana* is the next important childhood *samskara*, but before it there is *annaprashana* or ceremoniously feeding the child with solid food for the first time. Called *annapravish* in Kashmiri, it is to be performed in the sixth month after the birth of the child, but Laugakshi gives the option of performing the ceremony after the appearance of teeth. It is generally an elderly person in the family, a grandfather or grandmother or any other elderly relative who is supposed to feed the child seating it on the knee. The maternal relatives of the child, generally the maternal uncle, bring a bronze (or steel) plate, a cup, a tumbler and a spoon (all of silver) for this occasion.

Chudakarana (*mundan*) or the first tonsure of the male child is called *zarakasai* in Kashmiri and is usually performed when the child is about three years old. The *grihya sutras* prescribe it even at the end of the eighth or the beginning of the ninth month, but the date is not generally adhered to, the religious authorities give the option of performing it in the fifth or even the seventh year. Today when the community has been displaced from the Kashmir Valley and many of the prescriptions of Laugakshi have been done away with, some people prefer to perform it at the time of *yajnopavit* (sacred thread investiture ceremony) of the child – that is those who still perform it. The services of the barber are requisitioned, who inevitably, and interestingly, happened to be Muslim before the exodus as barbering is among the professions that Kashmiri Pandits do not take up. The Muslim barber performed the ceremonial tonsure of a Hindu child and he was paid for his services in both cash and kind. It was an important religious ceremony which had assumed more of a social colour.

The child on this occasion is given a ritual bath and made to wear new clothes. After the worship of Ganesha, the barber is asked to shave off his hair, except the top tuft or *chuda* which is called *tshog* in Kashmiri, which is collected on a new piece of cloth. The cropped hair is then gathered in an earthen vessel filled with water and a few walnuts. Later the hair and the walnuts are buried beneath a tree. Keeping of the tuft of hair on the top of the head or *tshog* was until recently considered to be one of the "compulsory outward signs of the Hindus", but hardly anybody keeps it now.

Upanayana or the sacred thread investiture ceremony, called *mekhal* in Kashmiri, is regarded as one of the most important *samskaras* by Kashmiri Pandits for a boy – a must

before marriage. By virtue of its performance a person is regarded to have been initiated and having acquired the status of a *dvija* or twice-born in the society. Originally an educational rite, the sacred thread investiture was later invested with mystical significance linked with "the idea of the second birth through the *Gayatrimantra*".[11] For the Kashmiri Pandits wearing of the sacred thread became a necessary ritual not only for initiating a young boy into Brahminhood by teaching him to recite the Gayatri Mantra or because it was regarded as an essential symbol of Hindu identity, but also because it was an essential prerequisite that made him eligible for marriage. That is why at present the *yajnopavit* ceremony is mostly performed a few days before marriage, though cases of performing at a younger age are not infrequent.

Performed at the astrologically chosen moment, the ceremonies connected with *mekhal* are mostly the same as adopted by other Hindu communities of the country but with several regional features which are unique to the Pandits. It is generally a two or three day affair beginning with *manzyrath* or "henna night" when a little henna is applied to the boy's hands for auspiciousness, and more elaborately to the hands of his female relatives and guests. The paternal aunt is supposed to do the job and is of course given cash presents from everybody for her pains. The ceremony is more of a social nature, performed amidst singing of folk songs and hymns which lend a touch of festivity to it.

Another preparatory ceremony is *divagon*, derived probably from Sanskrit *Devagaman* or "arrival of the gods". On this occasion the gods – Ganesha and the *sapta matrikas* or seven mother goddesses – are invoked to bless the boy to be initiated who sits before the *havan kund* offering oblations into the sacred fire. Ritual drawings of *kalpavriksha* (the wish-fulfilling tree) with a *shatchakra* base, supposed to represent the abode of the goddesses in *Nandanavana* or the Garden of Paradise, are made on the eastern wall with lime and vermilion. The *shatchakra* symbolizes Shakti and the drawing is called *divtamun*. The ceremony, which is performed on the occasion of marriage also, is indicative of the deep influence of *Shaktivada* or the Tantrik cult of the Divine Mother on Kashmiri Pandit religious life.

After wearing the sacred thread the *brahmachari*, or *mekhali maharaza* as he is called in Kashmiri, gets up for the round of alms (*bhiksha* – called *abid* in Kashmiri) for the "guru" (the performing priest). The person he approaches first, according to the Kashmiri custom, is usually his maternal aunt. When the last oblations into the sacred fire have been offered, starts another colourful ceremony called *samavartana samskara* marking the completion of the boy's "studies" and his return to the family. The boy invested with the sacred thread is now supposed to be ready for taking up his responsibilities in the world and to get married. He discards his garments as a *brahmachari* and wears new clothes with a new muslin turban tied round his head – with all these articles usually supplied by his maternal relatives. After being made to stand on a colourful *mandala*

called *vyug* with someone holding a parasol of flowers over his head, he is taken out in a procession to the nearby riverbank for *snana* or the ceremonial bath as a *snataka* (one who has completed his studies). There he is given some necessary instructions by the accompanying priest about wearing and washing his sacred thread and performing his daily religious duties. After this he returns to his home, again in a procession, with ladies singing auspicious songs and performing a special folk dance in a circle to welcome him. Everyone is then treated to a specially cooked vegetarian dinner. An interesting feature of the *yajnapavit* ceremonies is that the maternal and paternal aunts making arrangements for serving the guests with tea and milk with sumptuous snacks throughout the day.

Another unique feature that makes the sacred thread investiture ceremony quite colourful is what is called *narivan kharun* which appears to be a remnant of the *simantonnayana samskara.* It consists of husbands of the married ladies of the family putting through their hair strands of *narivan*, a red coloured consecrated protective cord with the help of mulberry twigs in a manner that they dangle along the side of their *dejihor*s (an ear ornament worn by Kashmiri Hindu women) like tassels. Only those women whose husbands are alive, take part in the ritual which is performed without recitation of any mantras, making them look very special and distinguished.

But the most important of all life-cycle rituals for the Kashmiri Pandits is marriage. While socially it is regarded as necessary for perpetuation of the family, and the race, it has a religious sanctity also as it is believed that through it one can pay off the debts one owes to his ancestors, the gods and the sages. Among the four *ashrama*s of life Kashmiri Hindus hold the *ashrama* of the householder as the highest because it provides support and succor to the entire society. That is why they have a tradition of *grihasthi sadhu*s or householder saints who worship God without renouncing the world or giving up their responsibilities towards their families. Like Hindus in general, marriage for the Pandits of Kashmir invariably means a monogamous union and is therefore regarded as a companionship for whole life. Even so, widow remarriage is still frowned upon while a widower is free to remarry – though such marriages are not very common now. A great change that has, however, taken place during the last few years, especially in the period following the exodus, is that the incidence of divorce has highly increased.

The form of marriage in vogue among the Pandits is known as *Brahamadeya* or the Brahma form in which the father gives away his daughter to a suitable man of good character and belonging to a respectable family. Another type of marriage, which is actually a variation of the Brahma type, is called *andyut.* This kind of marriage was rarely performed and was prevalent in remote villages or among economically weaker families. It involves voluntary mutual exchange of sons and daughters. In yet another type of marriage known as *gara pyath anun*, the bridegroom goes to the bride's house and lives there as member of the family – *ghar jamai* as he is called in Hindi.

Sagotra and *sapinda* marriages are not strictly prohibited though marriage between agnates having a common ancestor in the seventh or a lower generation may be allowed. This kind of exogamy helps to stop inbreeding in an endogamous society like that of the Kashmiri Pandits. It is, however, the social status and economic position of the family of the boy more than the *gotra* that is considered while deciding to give the girl's hand in marriage, preference being given to a well to do family in case of both the boy and the girl. While all Pandits are Brahmins, connubium or *kanyavyavahara* does not take place among all of them. For example, the *Karkuns* would not generally inter-marry with the *Gors* or the priestly class. Though this prejudice is now slowly disappearing, prejudice against marital ties with families engaged in so-called inferior trades still persists. Some of the trades that are to be avoided are that of the baker, the tailor, the barber or those related to manual work. The social position of the prospective bride's or bridegroom's family thus remains the most important consideration, its ranking or esteem determined by nobility of character, gentleness and sound financial status. Marriages outside caste or community are frowned upon, though incidence of such marriages has increased as a result of the boy's or the girl's personal choice. Arranged marriages, however, are still the rule fixed by parents generally after matching horoscopes – a near obsession with the Pandits.

So far as the marriageable age is concerned, the practice among Kashmiri Pandits has always been to perform marriage in an age in which the two parties are mature enough to make choice and give consent. However, during the Muslim rule, particularly of the Afghans, child marriages did become common because of Islamic influence as well as the feeling of insecurity that prevailed among the Hindus in that period. Laugakshi and other ancient sources show that pre-puberty marriages did not generally take place in early and early medieval Kashmir. But child marriages continued in the Kashmiri Hindu community after that time till the nineteenth and initial years of the twentieth century. Things began to change with the establishment of Dogra rule when modern influences crept in. Today, due to preference given to career, it is not uncommon for marriages to take place when boys and girls are well into their thirties.

The main ceremonies that constitute a Kashmiri Pandit marriage are three – the *manzyrath*, *divagon* and *lagan* but these are encrusted with numerous customs and rites peculiar to the community. In case of *mekhal*, these ceremonies take a more colourful form in a wedding. The rejoicing is on a much larger scale with ladies and professional singing parties singing with gay abandon to the accompaniment of folk instruments.

In case of *divagon*, the bride's ceremony is more elaborate than the bridegroom's, perhaps because of "purification" from the "pollution" supposed to have been caused by her menstruation. The bride specially dresses herself up in all her finery on the occasion and wears besides other jewellery the *dejihor*, an ear ornament that is to identify her as

a married woman, for the first time. Though it denotes the married status of a Kashmiri Hindu woman, the *dejihor* is not a kind of *mangalsutra* to be worn as long as the husband is alive. A married Kashmiri Hindu woman continues to wear the *dejihor* even after her husband's death.

As with other Hindus, the Kashmiri Hindu groom too proceeds to the place of the bride's father at the head of the marriage party consisting of his close relatives and wedding guests and is given a rousing reception by the bride's side. His arrival is announced by the sounding of a conch and he is made to stand on a *mandala* called the *vyug* in the courtyard before the marriage rituals begin. The bride is also brought and made to stand on the groom's left side on the *vyug*. As the wedding guests are given a sumptuous feast the bride and the bridegroom perform what is known as the *dvarapuza*. The bridegroom cannot enter the bride's house without performance of this ceremony at which the gods guarding the gate are worshipped before the *lagna* or the nuptial ceremony. What follows is the ceremony of *kanyadana* or "giving away the daughter" by the girl's father before the sacred fire, according to the *Brahmadeya* system mentioned earlier. Though according to the Grihyasutras only the father has the authority to give away his daughter, the Smritis allow the authority to be extended to other relatives also. This seems to have been done to meet exigencies arising out of untimely death of a father. The *lagna* ceremony must take place at the exact auspicious hour fixed astrologically by the priest.

After the groom's acceptance of the bride as a gift from her father, the *vivah homa* is performed. It will be interesting to note that oblations are now offered into the sacred fire by the bride and the groom directly to complete the *samskara*, the girl's father having played his role. 'The rite of the seven steps' or *saptapadi* is performed in Kashmiri Pandit marriage also as it is regarded essential for the legal confirmation and consummation of the marriage. The custom among the Pandits consists of making the bride and the bridegroom take seven steps around the sacred fire over seven coins – seven hundred rupee notes or more now – instead of seven heaps of rice grains as was done earlier. Vedic mantras are recited with every step, the bride following the bridegroom.

It is not possible to describe here every ritual performed by the Pandits according to the regional rites which are numerous and of considerable interest, but a few unique ceremonies will not be out of place to mention. One of these is the ceremonial entry of the *ganga vyas* or the River Ganga as the bride's female friend, usually represented by a young girl from the bride's family, after the *madhuparka* ceremony. Though the origin of this ritual is not known, it appears that in ancient times the bride was actually led to the river bank by her female attendants. The practice was later discontinued during the Muslim rule, in particular the Afghan rule for fear of religious persecution, the present enactment evoking a memory of the actual ritual. The young girl from the bride's side is supposed to embody the holy river as witness to the purity of the girl's conduct and

sanctity of the marriage ceremonies. Another interesting ritual is *athavas*, the Kashmiri equivalent for *panigrahana* or the Grasping of the Bride's Hand, an essential part of the Hindu wedding ceremony. The difference, which is quite significant, is that in the Kashmiri ritual both the bridegroom and the bride hold each other's hands, suggesting that both the partners are equally responsible for making the relationship firm and strong.

Instead of *jayamala* or the ceremonial exchange of garlands between the bride and the bridegroom, the custom among Kashmiri Pandits is the tying of an auspicious garland by the mother-in-law of the bride on the foreheads of both the marriage partners. The garland is known as *manna-mal* or *mangala mala*. However, after the exodus in particular, the custom of exchanging *jayamalas* has gained more ground.

But perhaps the most important of the ritualistic innovations of the Kashmiri Pandits is *posha puza*. The bridegroom and the bride are made to sit under the canopy of a red shawl or cloth and flowers are showered on them by the parents of the bridegroom and their close relatives, regarding them as embodiments of Shiva and Parvati. This is the concluding ceremony of a Kashmiri Pandit wedding after which the bride is considered to have entered into the *gotra* of her husband.

The Kashmiri Pandits have adopted an elaborate procedure for performing the last rites of a deceased kin, known as *antyeshti*. It consists of pre-cremation, cremation and post-cremation obsequies having broad similarities with the standard features of Hindu funeral ceremonies but also including several variations and modifications so far as details are concerned. The rituals include prayers for the departed soul and gifts and offerings to make his/her life after death as a *pitr* or an ancestor smooth and comfortable. Kashmiri Pandits regard the ritual of cremation as primarily a sacrifice or an act of expiation through the medium of fire because of the influence of Shaiva ritual system known as *Shivakarma*, many features of which are incorporated in their funerary and post-funerary rites. In today's circumstances, however, they are finding it extremely difficult to follow all the ordainments of the sacred texts in this regard, particularly because of a severe dearth of performing priests from their community.

As in the rituals of life, so in rituals of death too, the Pandits are influenced by notions of purity and impurity (*shaucha-ashaucha*) and auspicious and inauspicious (*shubha-ashubha*). For the whole family and close relatives of the deceased ten days following the death constitute a period of *ashaucha* or defilement called *hontsh* in Kashmiri. This impurity or pollution is a kind of taboo due to which people are prohibited to take any cooked food from the hands of these persons supposed to be polluted for the period. The pollution ends on the tenth day of the cremation when a *shraddha* is performed by the chief mourner on the bank of a river along with his close relatives and friends. The eleventh day and the twelfth day post-obsequy rituals are also performed by them like Hindus in general, the latter being regarded by them as most important as through them

the dead person's soul is believed to pass into *pitriloka* or the abode of the manes. Till then he remains a *preta* or a disembodied spirit. Later, like the rest of Hindus, they offer libations to the dead on fortnightly, monthly, six-monthly and yearly *shraddhas*.

Kashmiri Pandit *puja* or worship rituals follow the generally accepted pattern of *shodashopachara* or sixteen-step worship service or its abbreviated form in daily worship ceremonies (*nitya puja*) or special ceremonies related to sacred dates and sacred places (*naimittika puja*) whether as individual or collective religious activity. Special procedures are, however, followed for special *pujas*, allowing room for regional variations to come into play. Some of the worship rituals peculiar to Kashmiri Hindus have come down from the time of the *Nilamata Purana* while some have been introduced as a result of Tantric or Shakta influence. These include *Khetsimavas* or *Yakshamavasya* and *Gadabatta* which are reminiscent of mixing and commingling of races in Kashmir during pre-historic times and involve propitiation and appeasement of the Yaksha god Kubera with offerings of *khichari* or fish and rice. Fish and rice are also, or rather were before the exodus, offered to *Garadivata* (Skt. *Grihadevata*) or the guardian deity of the house.

We have dwelt at some length on the ritualistic behaviour of Kashmiri Pandits because rituals constitute the core of religion for the common people besides being significant markers of cultural identity. From the *Nilamata Purana* we gather that the early Kashmiris were a "joyful people" who lived in perfect harmony with their beautiful environs and celebrated numerous festivals amidst much singing and dancing. While some of these festivals were devotional in nature, several others celebrated the change of seasons and cultivation and harvesting of crops. Almost invariably they involved visiting gardens and scenic spots of which nature has gifted Kashmir with plenty. Many of these festivals continue to be celebrated even today like *Navsheen* or the first snow fall of the year, *Sonth* or the festival heralding spring and *Navreh* or the New Year's Day. Celebrating the blossoming of the almond trees at Badamwari or the 'Garden of the Almond Trees' sprawling on the green slopes of Hari Parbat was till recently a beautiful experience for them till most of the trees were cut down by some influential people. When terrorism broke out, the place was used by the recruits as a haven for hiding and arms training.

Shivaratri, known as *Herath* in Kashmiri is the most important festival of Kashmiri Pandits with its celebration spread over a whole fortnight. Pandits celebrate their Shivaratri one day ahead of other Hindus in accordance with Tantric rituals peculiar to them which involve worship of *Vatuka Bhairava* represented by a pitcher full of water in which walnuts are kept for soaking. The soaked walnuts are later distributed as *naivedya*. An essential feature of the annual Kashmiri festival of Shivaratri is the worship of aniconic baked clay images of Shiva, Devi, Vatuka and Rama Bhairava. Shiva is worshipped in the shape of a conic *linga* known as *sonipotul* according to Kashmirian Shaivite traditions. Interestingly, these baked clay images were made by Muslim potters in Kashmir as there

were no potters among the Pandit community. The Muslim potters made and sold these images to their Hindu clients.

The Kashmiri Hindu festival of *Navreh*, which we have referred to above, has also unique features. On the eve of this day, that is Chaitra *shukla pratipada* or the first day of the bright half of the month of Chaitra (March-April), a *thali* filled with un-husked rice, baked bread, some walnuts, a cup full of curds, a little salt, a silver coin, a pen and an inkpot, a mirror, a new *panchanga* or almanac, an image or picture of a deity and a bunch of flowers was the first thing to be seen by everyone in the family. The auspicious symbolism of these things for ushering in a happy and prosperous new year can hardly be missed. People would greet each other on this day with presents and visit gardens and parks blooming with flowers. *Navreh* has great significance for them as worshippers of the Mother Goddess too as the *pratipada* of Chaitra is also the first day of the *Navaratra* sacred to Durga. They throng Hari Parbat to pay obeisance at Chakreshwara to her in her manifestation as Sharika Devi who is greatly revered by the Pandits on account of her association with the birth of Kashmir from the primeval waters.

Another local goddess most popular with the Kashmiri Pandits is Ragnya Devi or Khshir Bhavani who is worshipped at Tulmul, a village near Srinagar. Regarded as a manifestation of the Divine Shakti or the Mother of the Universe, thousands rush to her temple on the annual festival of *Jyeshtha Ashtami* or the eighth day of the bright fortnight of *Jyeshtha* (May-June) when according to the legend she made her appearance. The Pandits continue to pour in on this day at the sacred shrine of the Goddess even in their present condition of dispersal, their faith in the Goddess conquering even the fear of death stalking the Valley due to terrorism. The shrine of the Goddess Ragnya is situated in the middle of a beautiful spring with its water said to change its colour miraculously. In fact, the cult of the Mother Goddess is so deeply entrenched and widespread among them that every Pandit family has one or the other of her many manifestations as their tutelary deity. The other local goddesses whose festivals they celebrate with great enthusiasm include Mahakali, Tripura or Tripura Sundari, Jwala and Jyeshtha, all of them having shrines that dot the entire Valley. Yet another shrine most revered by them, which is dedicated to Sharada, is located in the Kishenganga Valley which is now a part of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

But as they are no longer located in their native geographical and cultural habitat, and as the prospects of their return are diminishing with each passing day, the Kashmiri Pandits cannot remain immune to changes in their way of life which is under severe threat. They have already suffered considerable cultural loss because of their dispersal to different places and it remains to be seen how far their attempt to hold on to and consolidate their identity will succeed in the circumstances in which they are living at present. An obvious example of this is their loss of language, one of the most important

markers of identity, which they are finding difficult to retain as a language of communication at the familial level even. Failure to remain connected with its ecological and socio-cultural word stock can well expose them to the danger of cultural deracination. The situation has become more complicated as there are no Kashmiri medium schools in the places to which they have migrated. In fact there are no such schools even in the Kashmir Valley where Kashmiri has been used as a language of instruction or administration, that status having been appropriated by Urdu.

A survey was recently conducted by the J & K Centre for Minority Studies in Jammu regarding "Socio-economic Conditions of Kashmiri Displaced Persons" which has also recorded the changes that have taken place in the socio-cultural sphere in the community since their displacement. In a report published by the NGO, its Chairman, Moti Lal Kaul, observes: "Lesser proportion of children and grandchildren are communicating in Kashmiri language with other community members within their homes.... The preservation of Kashmiri language is strong in Camp localities as compared to non-Camp localities. But it is difficult to state how long these families will succeed to retain speaking Kashmiri language at homes."[12]

One of the major problems for the displaced Kashmiris in remaining connected to Kashmiri language and literature is that of script. As most of them are not conversant with the officially recognized Persio-Arabic script, which at any rate is unscientific and inadequate for rendering of Kashmiri sounds, they have started using a suitably modified Devanagari script for writing in Kashmiri – not a new thing though. But their attempts to get official recognition for it as an additional optional script received a severe set-back due to the negative reaction to it by some writers based in the Valley. In any case, books and magazines are being published in greater numbers in the modified Devanagari script than in the Persio-Arabic script used for the language.

Changes can be discerned in other areas of Kashmiri Pandit social and cultural life as well due to the impact of the community's displacement. Despite strenuous efforts to maintain ethnic purity, incidences of marriage outside the community have started nagging the Pandits, though this has to do more with the greater opportunities that young men and women of the community are getting of coming into contact with others at academic institutions or work places, and is mostly a matter of personal choice. Older members of the community look at it from the point of view of social "loss", particularly if a girl marries outside its fold. Cases of divorce, a virtually unknown phenomenon before the exodus, have also increased, rather disconcertingly, in recent years. This, however, can be attributed to the compulsions of the modern way of living and the liberal attitude of the community in such matters – though such cases are not necessarily looked upon with approval.

As mentioned earlier, Kashmiri Pandit women wear an ear ornament called *dejihor* to indicate their married status. Unlike the *mangalsutra,* the *dejihor* is not discarded by a woman even after her husband's death. Though wearing it continues to be the practice even now, the size of the ornament is getting smaller and smaller and many women try to hide it under a careful hairdo, while some have even discarded it.

Though a patriarchal society, the attitude of Kashmiri Pandits towards women has been generally liberal since the *Nilamata Purana* era. There have been no attempts to de-culturize their personality or to impose any irrational curbs on their activity. In fact the Pandits have been the first in Kashmir to give them access to modern education on par with men as will be borne out by their educational profile which is quite high. A near hundred per cent literacy is no mean achievement of which the Pandits can rightfully be proud of. Excellence in the academic field remains their hallmark in spite of discrimination and denial of rights that they have faced right from independence in respect of admissions to higher technical education and government jobs. As a result of their being a highly educated people, perhaps, they are forward-looking and sophisticated in their attitude to things. This may be the reason why they have taken to family planning seriously to an extent not warranted by their demographic position. There are no female foeticides among them, nor any tendency towards early marriage of girls, their marriageable age being determined more by career considerations now. Thus reconciliation between the traditional and modern is a noteworthy feature of their present social and cultural life. It was long back that they had given up many taboos that could have proved to be a de-accelerating factor in their march towards social progress.

The Pandits have been stereotyped as a people who despise all manual work and prefer only to wield the pen, their objection to manual work being that it is "derogatory to their Brahmin identity". This, however, is highly exaggerated as Pandits living in rural areas would cultivate their own fields and tend their cows, while many among those belonging to the urban areas had long discarded their objections to occupations other than white collar jobs. Though most would still prefer wielding the pen, there were many who would even go for work in factories like the silk-weaving factory in Srinagar, for instance, or take up jobs like that of a plumber, electrician, mechanic etc. in addition to trading and shop-keeping. Of course, being Brahmins, they still do not "engage in polluting activities such as barbering, removing and skimming dead animals, making shoes, winnowing pans and drums, slaughtering goats and sheep", as T.N. Madan has pointed out in his study of the Pandits of Uttarssu-Umanagri. For services like that of grocer, barber, milkman, washerman, butcher, potter etc. they depended on Muslims. It was because all occupational groups in Kashmir had converted to Islam and stuck to their traditional occupations. The Pandits, it must be said, remained in the vanguard of intellectual movements in Kashmir even after 1947, right up to the day they were forced to flee.

Today, even as they are living not as a compact society but as diaspora groups scattered all over the country and several other parts of the globe, the Kashmiri Pandits continue to adhere to their distinctive cultural traits and traditional values. Piety, compassion, filial affection, abhorrence for violence, sobriety, sophistication, refinement of taste, civility, hospitality, self-pride etc. are qualities they regard as ideal, irrespective of their sufferings as a people.

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CHAPTER 5

Religious Rituals and Ritual Arts of Kashmiri Hindus

S.S. Toshkhani

Although a large number of scholars have chosen to focus on India and in particular, Vedic ritual in the recent years, viewing it from different perspectives, ritual behaviour of Kashmiri Hindus has been completely missing from their studies. This is in spite of the fact that Kashmir Shaiva philosophy has evoked unprecedented interest throughout the scholastic world during this very period. Yet there is much in the religious rites and ceremonies of the numerically small but culturally rich Kashmiri Hindu community that could form a fascinating field of inquiry for the religious historian as well as the social anthropologist.

It is true that the fundamental core of Kashmiri Hindu rituals is the same as that of the religious ritual system prevailing in other parts of India, emanating as it does mostly from the same Vedic or Agamic sources. But it is equally true that with *deshachara* or regional factors coming into play a whole new body of ceremonies and rites has evolved around that core over the centuries which can be distinctly characterized as Kashmiri. But would it be pertinent to examine the ritual activity of Kashmiri Hindus in religious terms alone? Well known German scholar of Vedic ritual, Frits Stall describes ritual in ethnological terms of "FAP" (Fixed Action Pattern) and "MAP" (Modal Action Pattern) as suggested by W. H. Thorpe and Lan Barlow.[1] According to him, "rites become religious when they are provided with a religious interpretation". Accordingly, he refers to Asian rituals as rituals without religion.[2] Durkheim on the other hand regards ritual

as a necessary feature of religion.[3] Richard H. Davis, a scholar of medieval Shaiva ritual, is critical of those scholars who "characteristically present Indian rituals as instances of highly elaborate routinized behaviour either divorced from any formative consciousness or based on severely flawed apprehensions of the world.[4] He describes as "shaky, one-legged inquiries, such scholarly studies as tend to ignore the philosophical foundations on which the rituals are based.[5] Davis is actually referring to the Shaivagamic tradition that regards *jnana* (philosophical knowledge) and *kriya* (ritual action) as "integral and necessary to one another". It may be mentioned here that according to the traditional Tantric pattern a religious treatise must be divided into four *padas* or sections of *jnana*, *yoga*, *kriya* and *charya* to be complete, *jnana* and *kriya* constituting two broadly accepted divisions regarded to have an *inter se* relationship. Abhinavagupta's great work, the *Tantraloka*, offers a rich insight into both speculative and ritualistic aspects of Tantric esotericism. The latter aspect, it must be pointed out, has deeply influenced the ritualistic behaviour of Kashmiri Hindus even though it remains enchored in the ordainments of Laugakshi's *Grihyasutras* so far as domestic rituals are concerned.

Kashmiri Hindu ritualistic system has passed through various phases before evolving in its present form. Here we shall concern ourselves with recapitulating some of the points we have already made about its distinguishing features while shedding light on some additional facts. We shall obviously deal with the *Grihyasutras* of Laugakshi and its *paddhati* which being associated with the Kathaka school of the Black Yajurveda present the Vedic substratum of the sacramental beliefs and religious practices of its adherents in Kashmir. How far did the domain of these *sutras* extend beyond Kashmir is not known, nor do we know to what extent and how faithfully were their ordainments carried out there in their pure and pristine form, but one thing is certain that this substratum was already overlaid, or rather overwhelmed by indigenous elements by the time the *Nilmata Purana* was composed. The *Nilamata* does not deal with domestic rituals, but the picture that it presents of the religious life of early Kashmiris shows that the shift to Puranic modes of worship had already taken place. And despite the fact that Vedic mantras still formed the liturgical core of the chants that accompany ritual acts, they were used in essentially post-Vedic practices. The *Nilamata* is a text belonging to the 6th century AD or so, but actually covers developments dating back to much earlier times, representing the stage when Puranic elements had replaced the Vedic fire sacrifice (*yajna*) by practices like *vrata* (observance of religious vows), *dana* (charity), *japa* (repetition of the deities name), *utsava* (festivals), *tirthayatra* (pilgrimages to sacred places), *puja* (individual or collective worship of iconic deities), *upvasa* (fasts), etc. Yet many features of the Vedic ritual were retained in the new "liturgical program", such as *homa* (a kind of brief fire sacrifice) and mantra recitation, though there is a clear difference between the Vedic and the Puranic mantras (an aspect we shall discuss a little later). These

practices were relatively simpler but were supposed to bring the same merits and awards to the worshipper as the much more complex Vedic sacrifices.

A significant feature of religion in the Kashmir of the Nilamata era was the emergence of a whole new pantheon of gods and goddesses who could be accessed and summoned through their anthropomorphic images. This was unlike the Vedic deities who despite the colourful imagery of the hymns which invoke them remain invisible as they are without any material embodiments. Besides the five major Puranic deities Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Durga, Ganesha in their various forms and Surya, a host of gods and goddesses came to be worshipped and a number of festivals dedicated to them celebrated. These included the Naga deities, the deities of the Pancharatra and the Bhagvata cults, Kubera and even Buddha as an incarnation of Vishnu. But what indicates the existence and popularity of the mother goddesses cult in early Kashmir is the great number of female deities mentioned in the Purana. Some of them were quite known like Uma, Lakshmi, Sharada Aditi and Sachi and some of them like Shyama, Ragnya and an array of river goddesses, are relatively new and essentially of folk origin. The process of assimilation of the folk gods and goddesses into the Hindu pantheon also seems to have started during this period. Apart from the religious practices mentioned above, elements of *puja* rituals like some of the standard *upacharas* (worship services) had also developed. Temple rituals involving the cycle of these services to the deity had become a part of the religious life of early Kashmiris. Soon, temple became "the dominant religious institution" of Kashmir, to borrow words from Richard H. Davis.

Around the 7th century AD, an esoteric tradition known as Tantrism which involved secret rituals dealing with self-mastery for attaining *moksha* came to occupy the centre-stage in the religion practiced in Kashmir, as it did in many other parts of north and south India. With its non-Vedic origin going back to a much earlier time, Tantrism is based on an extensive body of liturgical texts which are primariliy centred on the cults of Shiva and Vishnu as well as Shakti, the last mentioned cult arising a little later but gaining fast popularity and predominance. Comprising the Shaiva *agamas*, Vaishnava *samhitas* and Shakta *tantras*, these texts are liturgical compendiums providing guidance on rituals and worship rites to adepts as well as ordinary worshippers. Tantric followers make use of meditative devices like mantra or mystic syllables and *yantra* or ritual diagrams, and stress on the doctrine of the union of male and female principles (Shiva and Shakti) as the ritual means to attain enlightenment and liberation. The Tantric or rather *agamic* texts from which Kashmir Shaivism later drew heavily upon to give a non-dualist interpretation to their doctrines and rituals include the Malini Vijaya Tantra, the Rudrayamala Tantra, Svachhanda Tantra, Netra Tantra, Mrigendra Tantra, Vamakeshvara Tantra etc. Shakta texts such as the *Lalita Trishati*, *Lalita Sahasranama*, *Kubjika Tantra*, *Yogini Tantra*, *Kaulavali Tantra*, *Kularnava Tantra*, *Durga Saptashati*, *Devi Bhagvata*, *Sharada Tilaka*

etc. also provided the theoretical underpinning to Tantric practices in medieval Kashmir. In the 10th century AD Abhinavagupta synthesized and integrated the doctrines and rituals of the Tantric *Krama*, *Kula* and *Trika* schools into Kashmir Shaivism bringing them all under one exegetical scheme in his monumental work, the *Tantraloka*. Many of these practices have been incorporated into the ritual system followed by Kashmiri Hindus today. This system, which also derives from Shiva Siddhanta as well as Pancharatra, thus comprises three clear strata or tiers – the Vedic, Puranic and Tantric, all of them combining into a composite whole. It extends not only to esoteric and mystic practices which one hardly comes across today but also to the domestic life-cycle rituals and Puja rites.

As Frits Staal points out, ritual traditions have social significance in that they identify groups and distinguish them from each other. They give people a sense of identity.[6] Taken in this sense, Kashmiri Hindu rituals distinctly project cultural and social values. One of their interesting feature is the way Vedic mantras are juxtaposed with Puranic and Tantric mantras only the priest knowing when and where and in which ritualistic context they are to be inserted. He accordingly memorizes these mantras and even uses them out of their original context. Staal, however, is of the opinion that mantras are meaningless and that there is practically little difference between Vedic, Puranic and Tantric mantras, "the monosyllabic mantras of the *stobha* type in the Vedas having "re-emerged in Tantrism after apparently lying dormant for more than a millennium."[7] Wheelock and Andre Podoux on the other hand make clear distinction between the various types of mantras, their views being quoted by Staal himself. Thus, according to Wheelock, the Vedic mantra "stands as a means to the ends of the sacrifice. The Tantric mantra, on the other hand as the essence of the ritual procedure, is an object of value in itself…"[8] Podoux is of the view that "Shaivite mantras are different from Vedic mantras because a Vedic mantra is essentially a verse or group of verses".[9] Staal gives examples to shows that some of the Tantric mantras are actually Vedic. Whatever the case may be, their happy co-existence in a Kashmiri Hindu ritual performance is quite worth taking note of and confirms our contention that the Kashmiri ritual has usually a three-tiered structure. An interesting example is that every major Kashmiri ritual begins with *kalasha puja* and the mantra *Omkaro yasya mulom* which describes the Vedas as a *kalpavriksha* or the wish – fulfilling tree. The functional difference between the Vedic and Tantric mantras, can however, not be ignored, the latter being used in ritual as well as meditation. Another interesting point is that the most popular Kashmiri Goddesses Ragnya and Sharika are worshipped with the *bija* mantras (and *yantras*) of *Tripura Sundari*, the fifteen-syllabled mantra of the last mentioned goddess being used for both. However. This identification of local goddesses with the great Mother Goddess herself is not peculiar to Kashmir alone. This becomes all the more interesting when we note that according to Tantric doctrine the deities are identical with their mantras. The deity is said to be present "as

soon as the mantra that invokes it has been recited". This makes it of fundamental importance that the mantra should be pronounced correctly. But keeping in view the peculiar pronunciation of Sanskrit by Kashmiris, this becomes virtually impossible. And yet Kashmiris have been great Tantrists. Perhaps, the distortions that we find in their pronunciation of Sanskrit arose at a later stage due to the extensive use of the Persian script during the Muslim rule.

Although there are many elements that the Kashmiri Hindu rituals have in common with pan-Indian Hindu rituals in general, it is their peculiarities that make them distinct – and this applies to the life-cycle rituals and Puja rites both. Take, for instance, the *Devagon* (Skt. *devagamana*) ceremony which is an essential ritual related to the *Mekhal* (sacred thread investiture) and marriage ceremonies. This involves invocation of Ganesha and the Sapta-matrikas for showering benedictions on the subject of the ceremony. A sacred grove representing the *kalpavriksha* with a *shatchakra* base is drawn on the wall on this occasion as the symbolic abode of these deities and is known as '*divta moon*'. A ritual bath is given to the person whose sacred thread or marriage ceremony is being performed and a brief *homa* too forms a part of the whole ritual. The bath also has its peculiarities and so have the mantras which are an assortment of the Vedic, Puranic and Tantric chants. Although there is a hint about the ritual bath in the *Laugakashi Grhyasutras*, *Devagon* is a unique feature of the Kashmiri ritual system. And why the Kashmiri Pandits insist on calling the investiture of the sacred thread as *Mekhal* is something that needs investigation.

The same can be said about the rite called *dvara puza*, performed just before the bridegroom is allowed to enter the bride's house, or *posha puza* performed at the end of the nuptial ceremony. The doors are taken to be the 'thresholds' between the outside world and the consecrated space inside, offering a passage into a new phase of life. It is, therefore, considered essential to pay homage to the guardian deities of the door to ward of perils and dangers and bring in protection and auspiciousness at the inception of a new life. Before entrance the bridegroom himself and later the bride is made to stand on a consecrated cosmic circle called the *vyug* and identified with Shiva and Parvati or Narayana and Lakshmi. The guardian deities of the entrance Ganesha, Dharma, Adharma, Khinkhini etc. are worshipped before entering a new house also with the same idea. *Krul*, or the auspicious vine scroll painted above the lintel of the entrance door is supposed to serve the same purpose. *Alath*, a uniquely, Kashmiri rite in which a person is welcomed by waving a pot full of water over his or her head too is performed to drive away evil spirits and influences and reinforce auspiciousness. Derived from the Sanskrit *aratrika* (Hindi *arati*), *alath* is also performed over a divine image, invoking the mystic and magical power of the waters.

As in the case of rituals of life, in performing rituals of death too, Kashmiri Hindus are influenced by the notions of purity and impurity (*shaucha-ashaucha*) and auspicious – inauspicious (*shubha – ashubha*). But even more than that they regard the ritual of cremation primarily as a 'sacrifice' or an act of expiation through the medium of fire because of the influence of Shaiva ritual. It is the "final" sacrifice, according to the Shaivas, before the departed soul attains liberation or identification with the "supreme state of Shivahood". In fact, the death rites among Kashmiri Hindus are very complicated because of this influence, as the Shaiva priests perform initiation rites even on the cremation ground. The Shiva Karma funerary rituals are in particular long and complicated as a whole set of purifactory actions are performed to consume and destroy the karmic bonds of the deceased. The *chittavasa* or *mayajala* in which the departed soul is "captured" as though in a net with mantras and then restored to the dead body, are meant to accomplish this. The sacrificial fire Agni, as Richard H. Davis explains, "identified as a form of Shiva's power of re-absorption, then consumes the body."[10] It is only "after suitable purifications and preparations" that the deceased is placed on the funeral pyre, he points out. Not many people are aware of the fact that Shiva Karma is only another name of the ritualistic aspects of Kashmir Shaiva doctrine. This can be seen in the post-funeral rites of *shraddha* also through which the dead person's transition from *preta* (disembodied spirit) to *pitr* (ancestor) is ensured.

Kashmiri *puja* rituals by and large follow the generally accepted pattern of sixteen *upacharas* or its abbreviated form, whether it be daily worship (*nitya puja*) or special ceremonies related to sacred dates or sacred places (*naimitika puja*) as individual or collective religious activity whether practiced in the temple or at home. In its "simplest outline" it involves invoking the deity, reverential gestures like *namaskara* or bowing or kneeling before it, prostrating before it and touching its feet, consecrating the worship place and ritual objects, purification rites, treating the deity as an honoured guest by offering it various *upcharas* like *asana* or seat, *padya* or water for washing feet, flowers, sandalwood or saffron perfume, incense, garment, food, and betel nuts and finally bidding it farewell (*visarjana*): Other important ritual actions are waving a five-wicked oil or camphor lamp (*ratnadipa*), waving a chowrie or a flywhisk, holding a parasol and singing of hymns to the accompaniment of ringing a handbell. Anointment with vermilion, sandalwood paste and oils are also a part of the series of services which the worshipper offers to the deity. This is what has been termed as "the least common denominator of Puja" by Davis, "as a form of Hindu worship."[11] But if we look more closely, the Kashmiri mode of *puja* presents its own version of the rites by its stress on some elements for which it has detailed prescriptions. Thus within the broad framework of *puja*, there is emphasis on the preliminary rites known as *panchashuddhi* or five purifications. These consist of purification of the worshipper's self, purification of the place of worship,

purification of the ritual objects, purification of the mantras and purification of the image or idol of the deity itself. Another distinguishing element is *tarpana* or offering of libation to the gods, sages and ancestors, which is a part of almost every major *puja* a Kashmiri Hindu performs. In fact Kashmiri Hindus seem to be obsessed with the idea of propitiating the ancestors.

These then are some of the distinctive features of the Kashmiri Hindu ritualistic tradition. The Kashmiri Hindu way of life, it must be pointed out has been widely disrupted and so has the observance by them of what most of them think to be the core of their religion – their rituals. Yet the quintessential idea behind them of uniting the divine and the human, sacred and the profane, of transforming the mundane into the spiritual still remains. This study of the ritual behaviour of a people who are no longer located in their geographical or cultural habitat, is by no means complete. There are many areas that need further and extensive investigation. However, this paper seeks to open a line of inquiry into an unexplored area.

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5. *Ibid.*
6. Fritz Stall, *op. cit.*
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CHAPTER 6

Kashmir's Contribution to Sanskrit Poetry and Poetics

Ved Kumari Ghai

Kashmir is the land where Sanskrit poetry and saffron both grow together, says Bilhana. It is very remarkable to find that Kashmir has produced, in quantity as well as quality, volumes of Sanskrit literature which are simply amazing in their width and depth of knowledge. Kashmir has contributed extensively to Sanskrit poetry, poetics, grammar, medicine, history and philosophy. All the six schools of Sanskrit poetics, namely, *Alamkara*, *Riti*, *Rasa*, *Dhvani*, *Vakrokti* and *Aucitya* originated and developed in Kashmir. The famous commentary *Kashika* on Panini's *Ashtadhyayi* and the commentaries on Patanjali's *Mahabhashya* were also composed here. It is believed that the great sage Charaka, associated with the *Ayurveda*, hailed from Kashmir and Dridhabala, who revised Charaka's work, was also a Kashmiri. The Chandra and the Katantra schools of grammar flourished in Kashmir. As regards philosophical literature, Kashmir's contribution in developing the Pratyabhijna system of Shaiva philosophy based on idealistic monism is widely recognized. Kashmir has produced voluminous Sanskrit literature of great merit in the form of *Puranas*, historical poems, court epics, devotional poems, anthologies, dramas, works on poetics and dramaturgy, didactic poems, satirical poems etc.

Puranas

Nilamata Purana, dating back to sixth century AD, has been referred to by Kalhana as

a work of great antiquity. According to Buhler, *Nilamata Purana's* great value lies in the fact that it is a repository of information regarding the sacred places of Kashmir and their legends which are required to explain the *Rajatarangini*, and that it shows how Kalhana used his sources. The *Nilamata Purana* contains a lot of information about the Kashmiri way of life – life of the common people, their food and drinking habits, amusements, currents of religious thoughts they followed and the rites and ceremonies they performed. These ceremonies and festivals are mostly similar to those observed in other parts of India. In the field of geography, it is interesting to know the similarity of the nomenclature of Kashmir as found in this work with that of other parts of India. The holy confluence of the Vitasta and Sindhu (Indus) is described as *Prayag*. Various *tirthas* of Kashmir such as Saraswati, Rishikulya, Ramahrida, Bhrigutunga, Chitrakuta, Bharatagiri etc. are names of some *tirthas* in other parts of India.

Visnudharmottara Purana, which was compiled in the southern part of Kashmir, near Jammu, belongs to fifth or sixth century AD. It is an encyclopedic work dealing with various subjects like mythology, cosmogony, cosmology, astronomy and astrology, omens and portents, polity, sociology, religion, medicine, agriculture, animal husbandry, art and architecture. Divided in three *khandas* and 87 chapters, the work begins with the request of King Vajra, son of Aniruddha and great grandson of Krishna, to the sages to narrate the various Vaishnava *dharmas*. They request the sage Markandeya to perform the arduous task. Accordingly, Markandeya narrates the legend of uplifting the earth out of primeval waters by the Boar incarnation of Vishnu. There follows the narration of different aspects correlated with the creation of the world, the various cosmic cycles, the creation of gods, demons and human beings. Various *Puranic* stories are also incorporated. In the descriptions of Bharat's march against Shailusha, the King of Gandharvas, many *tirthas* and rivers of this region, namely, Devika, Chandrabhaga, Vitasta etc. have been eulogized.

The second part deals mainly with polity. The duties of the kings, queens, ministers, army and judiciary have been discussed in detail. The duties of the public in accordance with four *Varnas*, *Ashramas* and *Purusharthas* have also been described. In the third part, we find details of various types of art, music, dancing, acting, painting, iconography and various types of architecture. One hundred one varieties of temples have been mentioned. *Hamsagita* and *Sankaragita* also form part of this *Purana*, which is highly important from the point of view of the cultural history of the southern part of Kashmir.

The third *Purana* is *Vasukipurana* which was compiled in Bhadrawah and describes the religious cults and ethnic moorings of that hilly area. In 501 verses, it describes through a dialogue between Shiva and Parvati, various sacred places, rivers and hills of Bhadrawah which is called Bhadrashrama. The story of Jimutavahana and Shanchuda seems to have been taken from Harsha's play *Nagananda*, hence this work should be dated after seventh century AD. The Naga cult has been very popular in this area as is

clear from the great religious importance given to Vasukikunda and various other *tirthas* of Vasukimandala mentioned in this work. It is interesting to find many rivers of this area named after the Gariga such as Bhagirathi, Jahnavi, Mandakini, Svetaganga, Ksiraganga, Atulaganga, etc.

Poetry

The works of many poets referred to by Kalhana in his *Rajatarangini* have not survived, but whatever has survived is sufficient to establish that the Sanskrit poets of Kashmir did not limit their poetry within the peripheries of royal courts but also depicted the joys and woes of the common man. In the period of the Karkota King Jayapida (779-813 AD), there flourished Damodaragupta, Manoratha, Shankhadatta, Chataka and Sandhimat. Of these only Damodaragupta's work *Kuttanimata* has come down to us. It is a unique work with a curious mixture of romantic, satiric and didactic elements. Within the main story of a young courtesan seeking advice from an old procuress are woven many interesting stories depicting how luxury and moral laxity had corrupted the rich social stratum of that period.

As far as the satiric and didactic poetry is concerned, the earliest work is *Bhallata Shataka* consisting of one hundred and eight verses in the *anyapadesha* style. The poet belonged to the times of King Shankaravarman (883-902 AD), son and successor of the benevolent king Avantivarman. Kalhana writes in *Rajatarangini* that Shankarvarman had turned out to be a tyrant and levied heavy taxes on the villagers. In his reign, great poets like Bhallata had to live without any means of livelihood while Lavata, who was a mere load bearer, got a rich salary of 200 *dinars*. Bhallata gives vent to his feelings of displeasure at this injustice by scolding the wind thus:

> What a wrong behaviour this, O wind! The dust which deserves to be crushed by the feet of the people is being taken by you to the high sky, a place for the group of luminaries. You may not care for obstructions in the sight of the people, but what about the dirt you have put on your own body. How is that to be removed? (v.99)

Hinting at the dark future of the country due to the cruel policies of the tyrant ruler, Bhallata presents an *anyokti* about a hunter and a forest thus:

> This bow is wide like the yawning mouths of Death. The arrows are like the quick poison. His skill excels that of Arjuna, agility is perceptible in every part of the body. Alas! This fowler, a rogue has cruelty at heart and a sweet song on his lips. I think the forest will be bereft of all animals..

Kshemendra's name comes at the top in the field of satire. He wrote more than forty works of which only nineteen have survived. Besides providing us with abstract of the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, Gunadhya's *Brihatkatha*, Bana's *Kadambari* and Bauddha *avadanas*, and treatises on rhetoric, erotica and prosody, he has written a large number of didactic and satiric poems dealing with the hard realities of rural and urban life in Kashmir. His *Samayamatrika*, modelled on Damodaragupta's *Kuttanimata*, describes the trickeries of a harlot, Kankali. She relates to a young courtesan. Kalavati, her own exploits in younger days when she wandered through the length and breadth of Kashmir and seduced the people in various guises as a flower-girl, sales-girl, cake-seller, beggar woman, woman magician and holy saint.

Another work, *Darpadalana*, is a didactic-satiric work denouncing in seven sections vanity arising out of high family, wealth, learning, beauty, valour, charity and penance. Kshemendra's view is that it is the personal merit of an individual which counts and not the family in which he is born. The wealth of a miser is like the disease of the hearth which causes endless misery, while black money is useless as one cannot spend it openly due to fear. That type of learning is worthless which is devoid of good character and which changes justice into injustice and injustice into justice. The poet speaks against the vanity of beauty as it lasts only for a short time and is robbed of charm by old age; and the vanity of valour which is used for killing and not for protection of life. Similarly, only that gift is praiseworthy, which removes the misery of others and the best kind of penance consists in doing good to others.

Kshemendra's *Sevyasevakopadesa* is a shrewd study of the relation between the master and the servant. The poet considers them lucky who have no need to serve the rich. In *Kalavilasa*, Ksemendra describes in ten cantos the various modes of deceit practised by the people. The wicked clerk skilled in crooked writing, the wandering singers and actors adept in snatching money from the people, the quack squeezing money from patients, the crooked astrologer, the tricky goldsmith stealing gold under the very nose of the customer, all are taken from the real life of Kashmir of those days.

In *Desopadesha* and *Narmamala*, he depicts in the same style and spirit, the corrupt bureaucracy and evil elements of the society of his times. The misdeeds of officers in the administration are described with outspoken frankness. Kshemendra does not spare the anti-social types like the hoarder who hoards grain for half a century and prays for famine so that he may sell it at a cut-throat price. Even students who care more for eating than for studies do not escape his attention. He attacks corruption strongly at all levels, from that of a minister to that of a clerk, but he realizes like a modern journalist that satire is a far more powerful weapon than sermonizing and so seeks to mend affairs by taunting people. His aim is to warn the people against the corruption of the bureaucracy and the roguery of other anti-social elements. His work *Chaturvargasaingraha* deals with four

ends of life – *Dharma* (virtue), *Artha* (wealth), *Kama* (love) and *Moksha* (salvation) and the *Nitikalpataru* can be called an encyclopedia of worldly wisdom and polity. The essential qualities of princes, kings, ministers, ambassadors, spies etc. have been described and illustrated with interesting stories. His *Charucarya* is also a didactic work of hundred verses.

Similar to *Bhallata Shataka* is another work *Anyoktimuktalata* of Shambhu who was a court-poet of King Harshadeva (1089-1101 AD). In one hundred and eight detached verses in varied metres, the poet has presented many soft and hard facts of human life. *Vakroktipancashika* of Ratnakara is a collection of fifty verses about the dialogue of Shiva and Parvati, each verse illustrating the figure of speech called *vakrokti*. Bilhana's *Shanti Shataka* is a didactic poem divided into four chapters called *Paritapopasama*, *Vivekodaya*, *Kartavyopadesha* and *Brahmaprapti*. The poem tries to prove the utter worthlessness of worldly pleasures and the great importance of renunciation for attainment of salvation.

Of the court epics of Kashmir, there are *Kapphinabhyudaya* of Shivasvamin, *Haravijaya* of Ratnakara, *Ravanarjuniya* of Bhima, *Shrikanthacharita* of Mankha and *Kathakautakam* of Shrivara.

Shivasvamin, the author of *Kapphinabhyudaya*, was a court-poet of Avantivarman. This court epic of 20 cantos deals with the story of the South Indian King Kapphina's war with King Prasenjit of Shravasti and the former's conversion to Buddhism. Following the typical style of a *mahakavya*, the poet has embellished the small narratives with descriptions of seasons, mountains, sunrise, sunset, moonlit night, water sports etc.

Ratnakara has given us a stupendous *mahakavya* of fifty cantos dealing with the defeat of the demon Andhaka by Hara. It seems that the poet wanted to excel Bharavi and Magha through his knowledge of rhetorics and polity. About eight cantos deal with Ratnakara's views on polity and ten cantos describe erotic practices like plucking of flowers, sporting in water, drinking and enjoying the sunset etc. *Ravanarjuniya* of Bhatta Bhima is an epic poem of twenty-seven cantos dealing with the war of Kartavirya Arjuna with Ravana. Along with poetic descriptions, the poem provides illustrations for all sections of Panini's grammar. The work can be well compared with Bhatti's *Ravanavadha*.

Shrikanthacharita by Mankha of the reign of King Jayasimha (1127-56 AD) is based on a Puranic story of the killing of the demon Tripura by Shiva. There are beautiful descriptions of nature in poetic style. Seeing the sunset and the moon-rise together, the poet compares the redness of the sunset with fire, the sky with an earthen stove and the moon with a frying pan which has some black spots. Kamadeva has created this to make the hearts of the separated lovers boil in the frying pan. The twenty-fifth canto of *Shrikanthacharita* gives us very important information about the literary circles of those days in Kashmir. The poet refers to a meeting of twenty-seven scholars in various fields

of literature, grammar, *Veda, Ayurveda* and philosophy who had gathered at the house of his brother Alamkara. Two ambassadors, Tejakantha sent by King Aparaditya of Konkana, and Suhala sent by King Govinda Chandra of Kannauj, were also present in that literary meet. The majority of scholars mentioned by Mankha were from the field of literature. Thus Kalyana, Garga, Govinda, Jalhana, Patu, Bhudda, Yogaraja, Loshtadeva, Shrikantha, Shrigarbha, Shrivatsa and Saththa were men of literature while Janakaraja, Lakshmideva and Ramyadeva were well versed in the *Vedas*. Ananda, Jinduka, Trailokya, Nandana, Prakata and Shriguna were scholars of philosophy while Ruyyaka and Naga had specialized in rhetorics. Mandana was a scholar. Mankha presented his poem before all these scholars for literary criticism and the work got due approval. All this gives us a very pleasant picture of the literary life of ancient Kashmir.

Kathakautaka composed by Shrivara, who lived during the time of four Sultans of Kashmir, Zain-ul-abdin, Haidar Shah, Hasan Shah and Muhammad Shah, is based on the story of Yusuf and Zulaikha as narrated by Mulla Jami. Zulaikha, a beautiful princess dreams of a young man and falls in love with him. With great difficulty, she finds him but he does not give her a proper response. Yusuf is put into prison while Zulaikha is thrown into the ocean of grief. At the end, the lovers are united by the grace of Lord Shiva.

Delaramakathasara of Rajanaka Bhatta Ahladaka is another Sanskrit *kavya* based on a story of the son of a Sultan and a courtesan. Kashmir has also produced some famous epitomes like *Kathasaritasagara* of Somadeva and *Kadambarikathasara* of Abhinanda besides the *Manjari Kavyas* of Kshemendra referred to earlier.

Historical Poems

Kashmir ranks the highest as far as historical poems in Sanskrit are concerned. Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* alone is sufficient to challenge the view that Indian writers were devoid of historical sense. There are, however, other poems with historical themes and also three continuations of *Rajatarangini* by Jonaraja, Shrivara and Prajyabhatta and his pupil Shuka. Some historical poems like *Somapalavilasa*, which gave a life history of King Somapala of Rajouri, *Jayasimhabhyudaya* which was based on the history of King Jayasimha of Kashmir, and *Bhuvanabhyudaya* of Shankuka which described the battle between Mamma and Utpala of Kashmir are lost to us.

The earliest historical poem available is *Vikramankadevacharita* of Bilhana. Bilhana was born at Khonamusha (present day Khonamuh) near Pravarapura in Kashmir but, after completing his education, he went out and travelled in various parts of India in quest of fame and fortune. He visited Mathura, Kanyakubja, Prayag, Varanasi, Bundelkhand, Dhara, Anhilwad, and finally settled at Kalyan, where he wrote his *kavya* describing the exploits

of his patron, King Tribhuvanamalla Vikramaditya VI. Composed in eighteen cantos, the poem describes the history of the Chalukya dynasty of Kalyan from its mythical origin up to the reign of Vikramaditya VI. Vikrama's marriage with the Shilahara princess Chandralekha and the love sports of the couple occupy more than seven cantos which indicates that Bilhana was interested more in poetical descriptions than in giving historical accounts. The historicity of many events of Vikramaditya's time are also borne out by epigraphical evidence. Another historical *kavya*, *Rajendrakarnapura* by Shambhu, is just a panegyric eulogizing the conquests of his patron, King Harsha. It is a small poem of seventy-five verses.

Prithvirajavijaya, which is available incomplete from canto first to canto twelfth, gives an authentic genealogy and history of ancestors of Prithviraja. In the twelfth canto, there is mention of a poet Jayanaka who came from Kashmir to serve in the court of Prithviraja. It is probable that here the author refers to his own self. The poem is available only up to this point but there must have been some more *sargas* as the title indicates the victory of Prithviraja over Ghauri.

Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* is the most important work in Sanskrit which has been planned and executed as history. Though son of Champaka, a faithful minister of King Harsha of Kashmir (1089-1100), Kalhana was not drawn directly into the whirlpool of the political life of his land and had the good fortune of watching from near the sad and dreary state of his country. With his keen sense of observation and inherited understanding of political affairs, appreciable catholicity of mind to respect other religious creeds and admirable literary gifts, he was justified in his ambition of writing a systematic history of his motherland. He knew the duties and obligations of a true historian as he himself says, "meritorious poet alone deserves praise whose word like the sentence of a judge keeps away from love or hatred in recording the past".

Kalhana has based the first three cantos of his work on the *Puranas* and legends and is not precise in giving account of fifty-two kings. From the fourth canto onwards, he stands on the solid ground of history with the account of Durlabhavardhana, founder of the Karkota dynasty. The sixth canto gives the history of the Utpala dynasty starting from Avantivarman, and describes the reign period of ten kings up to Queen Didda. The seventh canto gives account of six kings of Lohara dynasty and the eighth canto gives detailed accounts of Uccala, Sussala, Bhikshachara and Jayasimha as personally observed by the poet. His presentation of contemporary history is precise and commendable. His power of characterization is marvellous. With a critical eye, he has observed the intrigues of the royal courts and described them vividly. As a poet too, he must be appreciated for his vivid and graphic imagery. His description of the tragic end of several kings in words of inexpressible pathos makes an indelible impression on the readers' hearts.

The first continuation of *Rajatarangini* is by Jonaraja who has picked up the thread where Kalhana left it and has brought the history down to the time of Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin. An account of 23 kings has been given in this work. The Hindu rule ended in Kashmir with the imprisonment of Queen Kotadevi by Shamsuddin. Jonaraja praises the fourth Sultan, Shahabuddin, as a good administrator and criticizes Sultan Sikandara for his misdeeds. Sultan Zain-ul-abdin has been portrayed as a benevolent king who loved his subjects. The second continuation is *Jain-Rajatarangini* by Shrivara which describes the reign of Zain-ul-Abdin, Haider Shah, Hasan Shah and Muhammad Shah in 2,241 verses. Zain-ul-Abdin used to listen to the texts of Valmiki *Ramayana* and *Yogavashishtha* and got some Sanskrit works translated into Persian and Persian works into Sanskrit. The third continuation is *Rajavalipataka* by Prajyabhatta which is not published and the fourth one is by his student Shuka which covers the period up to 1538 AD. All these historical poems are important for the political and cultural history of ancient Kashmir.

Other Poetry

In the field of devotional poems, there are many works of which the well-known are *Devishataka* of Anandavardhana, *Stutikusumanjali* of Jagaddhara containing prayer hymns to Shiva, *Ardhanarishvara stotra* of Kalhana praising Shiva and Parvati together, *Sragdhara stotra* of Sarvajnamitra eulogizing the Buddhist Goddess Tara in 37 verses in the *Sragdhara* metre, *Ishvarashataka* of Avatara and *Devinamavilasa* of Sahib Kaul. Many devotional poems, which are still unpublished, include *Ratnashataka* by Ratnakantha that beautifully describes various aspects of the Sun God at dawn, mid-day and dusk.

Anthological literature of Kashmir is also noteworthy. Vallabhadeva's *Subhashitavali* contains 3,527 verses of about 360 poets. Jalhana's *Suktimuktavali* contains 2,790 verses of more than 240 authors. Poetry of many writers whose works have been lost has come down to us only through these anthologies.

Drama

Many Sanskrit plays must have been written in Kashmir as the *Nilamata Purana* prescribes dramatic performance at social and religious functions. Kalhana also refers to the author Chandraka who had written some plays to be staged before the public. It is, however, sad that only three specimens, namely, *Padataditaka*, a *bhana* written by Shyamilaka, *Agamadambara* – a four-act play by Jayanta Bhatta and *Karnasundari* – a *natika* by Bilhana, have survived. *Padataditaka* gives a vivid description of the common life of the people in a lively language full of satire. *Agamadambara* is a philosophical play describing various cults popular in Kashmir such as the Vaidikas, Bauddhas, Kshapanakas, Tantrikas,

Shaivas and Charvakas. Queen Sugandha, in order to resolve differences among the various cults, arranged an academic conference where the famous scholar Bhatta Sahata was nominated as judge. After listening to all the views, he solved the problem of apparent contradiction in various *Agamas* by saying that all these are like different doors to a single house or a single city. The paths may differ but the goal is one and the same, namely, salvation. As there is only one God, He by His own will appears as Buddha and Manu to teach various *Agamas*. *Karnasundari* is a romantic play depicting the love between Chalukya Prince Kamadeva and Vidyadhari Karnasundari. It shows the influence of Harsha's play *Ratnavali*.

Poetics

The contribution of Kashmir is unique in the field of poetics as all the six schools of Indian poetics had their origin in Kashmir. The history of Sanskrit poetics can be divided mainly into three stages. The first stage was of Bharata's *Natyashastra* when poetics was considered as a part of dramaturgy; in the second stage, the two claimed independent and separate considerations; and in the third dramaturgy came to be considered under poetics. The first stage is represented by Bharata's work only, but as regards the next two stages of the development of this branch of literature, Kashmir's contribution is the largest. The Kashmiri scholar Bhamaha of early eighth century AD is the earliest after Bharata.

It was Bhamaha who first of all dealt with the problem of definition of *kavya* and gave it as *shabdharthau sahitau kavyam* (togetherness of word and meaning is *Kavya*). It was he who first of all reduced the number of *gunas* from ten to three (*madhurya, oja, prasada*) and it was he who first of all pointed out the importance of *vakrokti* which was later on used by Kuntaka to find a new school by composing *Vakroktijivitam*. Udbhatta of the court of King Jayapida of Kashmir wrote a commentary on Bhamaha's work and also in independent work *Alankara Sangraha* which defines 41 types of figures of speech. Udbhatta's contemporary Vamana who wrote *Kavyalankara Sutra* is the foremost representative of the school which regarded *riti* or style as the soul of poetry.

Of Lollata and Shankuka of the time of Ajitapida, no work has survived but we know from quotations that Lollata had opposed the views of Udbhatta and had written a commentary on Bharata. Shankuka criticized his theory on *rasa*. Both these belonged to the *rasa* school, the former believing in *utpattivada* and latter in *anumitivada*.

Avantivarman's reign period brought to light four rhetoricians named Anandavardhana, Rudrata, Mukula and Induraja. Induraja belonged to the *Alankara* school of Bhamaha. Mukula put forth the theory of importance of *abhidha* in his *Abhidhavrttimatrka* Anandhavardhana's great work *Dhvanyaloka* is a commentary on certain *karikas* by him or his predecessors. He regards *dhvani* or suggestion as the soul of poetry. His proposition

is that just as the loveliness of a lady is something over and above her limbs, so in the words of great poets we find an exquisite charm which is over and above the words and their meaning and this is *dhvani*.

The theory of *dhvani* was further developed by Anandavardhana's commentator Abhinavagupta and was brought to perfection by Acharya Mammata of this very land. The question as to what is the soul of poetry was well discussed and answered by these epoch-makers in the field of poetics. With the establishment of the sense and function of suggestion in poetry which are named *Vyangyartha* and *Vyanjana*, these Acharyas put forth the theory that all good poetry must have a sense implicit in it. *Dhvani* was regarded of three types: suggestion of matter (*vastudhvani*), suggestion of figure (*alankara dhvani*), and suggestion of emotional mood (*rasadhvani*). Anandavardhana and his followers laid special stress on *rasadhvani*. *Rasa* was already mentioned by Bharata, but it was this school which developed a clear-cut system out of it with the theory of *rasa* also being suggested by *dhvani*. The poet can at best directly express the three factors, *vibhava*, *anubhava* and *sanhcaribhava* which bring about the *rasa* but not the *rasa* itself which is inexpressible in its nature. He can only suggest the *rasa* with the help of these factors.

Bhatta Nayaka, who lived after Anandhavardhana and before the time of Abhinavagupta, and Mahimabhatta, who lived after Abhinavagupta and before Mammata, controverted the *dhvani* theory but failed to do so as all the later writers quote them only to refute their theories.

Kuntaka, the founder of a *Vakrokti* school, who lived before Mahimabhatta, has tried to include all ideas of *dhvani* and *rasa* into *vakrokti* which, according to him, is a striking or charming mode of expression. But just like the *anumana* theory of Mahimabhatta his *vakrokti* theory also did not receive liberal recognition at the hands of later theorists nearly all of whom since Mammata's time accepted the *dhvani* theory of Anandavardhana. Kshemendra also entered this field as propounder of *auchitya*. The idea of propriety was mentioned by Anandavardhana and some other writers but Kshemendra developed it to its extreme and regarded *auchitya* as the essence of *rasa*, and the soul of poetry. He also established the importance of *chamatkara* in poetry.

The last great Kashmiri Acharya in the field of poetics is Mammata. No less than 75 Sanskrit commentaries have been written on his *Kavyaprakasha*, which is a complete manual of poetics. Thus we find that leaving aside Dandin, Rajashekhara and Bhojaraja almost all eminent writers in the field of poetics belonged to Kashmir.

CHAPTER 7

Some Kashmiri Pandit Historiographers

Mushtaq A. Kaw

The Greek, Chinese, Indian, Egyptian and Roman civilizations represent the culmination of a process of cultural interaction among diverse social groups and communities since early times. Such a process was not specific to a region or regions but rather to the world at large. More so, it was fostered by a galaxy of distinguished personalities notwithstanding their diverse ethno-historical and cultural descent: the hordes of warriors, adventurers, explorers, scientists, scholars, traders, priests, artists, craftsmen etc. While experiencing trials and tribulations, they upheld and promoted human relations on zero sum principle as is vindicated by scores of archaeological remains and abundant historical literature. However, the given world-wide human relationship was reinforced by the 10^{th}-11^{th} century European "Renaissance" which revolutionized art, architecture, learning and literature in particular and science, technology and medicine in general. By all means, such an intellectual movement unfolded and brought the humanist scholars close to the existential realities of life within the larger global framework.

Kashmir was no exception to this universal phenomenon. A large number of eminent writers made a remarkable debut in transforming the Valley into a rich centre of culture and civilization: the great conquerors, Lalitaditya Muktapida and Shihab-ud Din; the enlightened and just rulers, Anantivarman and Zainul Abidin; the soul-searching philosophers, Abhinavagupta and Allama Muhammad Iqbal, the *Sheikhu'l Hadis*, the revered mystics, Lal Ded and Nuruddin Rishi; and the romantic poets, Mehjoor, Ahad

Zargar and Rasool Mir. The Kashmiri historians and chroniclers, both Hindus and Muslims, also figure in the list of the great sons of the soil. They too made their mark in the Kashmir historiography and devoted themselves to acquiring and building historical knowledge on the basis of specified tools and methods.

To this effect, beginning was made by a number of informal Hindu historiographers of the 7th-10th centuries: Nil Muni, Somdeva, Kshemendra and others. In their famous works, *Nilmata Purana*, *Kathasaritsagara* and *Brihat Katha Manjari*, they meticulously brought to fore the hitherto unknown facets of Kashmir history and culture and the existential realities of primitive forms of religion with devotion to sun, fire, tree, animal and human deities for seeking blessings in this and the world hereafter. Consequently, they connected human relations with nature, spirit and matter and contributed to fostering a composite culture based on mutual influences from within and outside Kashmir. Besides focusing on state-church relationship, the early Kashmiri Pandit historiographers presented a vivid picture of a stratified Kashmir society with nobility and priests constituting the reference groups followed by the traders, merchants, peasants and other middle and lower class people. However, being fictional in essence, non-formal historical accounts were construed to be less credible till recent past. It was with the evolution of the French "Annales" school of thought and its pronounced emphasis on "total" history, recognising both conventional and non-conventional sources of history, that the aforementioned mythical accounts found a legitimate space in Kashmir history and culture.

Kalhana

Whatever little vacuum was left in the process was filled by Pandit Kalhana. He was indeed the first formal historiographer of Kashmir who was sensitized to the fundamentals of historiography and whose technique had much in common with the methods and ideas espoused by the renowned historians, E.H. Carr (*What is History?*: 1961), Hayden White (*Metahistory*: 1974) and the social scientists like Toynbee, Hegel, Karl Marx, etc. Kalhana's identifiability presupposes his worldview and innate comprehension of historical and sociological studies based on prescribed norms like sourcing, interpretation, style, techniques etc. Since the tools of historical investigation changed from time to time, the term historiography carried different meanings to the social scientists over the years. Nevertheless, Kalhana's scholarship was such that it was relevant to all times to come. This is proved by the product of his scholarly dispensation, the *Rajatarangini,* which provides the earliest specimen of Kashmir historiography. Written in the 12th century (1148-49 AD), it draws substantially on information from the *Nilmata Purana*, *Mankha's Shrikantha Charita* and other literary and inscriptional sources of ancient Kashmir. Because of these influences, Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* is amalgam of a thoughtful description of diverse subjects ranging

from climate and geography to polity, economy and society and changing power politics to agrarian relations involving landed aristocracy, the *Damaras*, their revenue assignments, the *agraharas* besides the priests, religious institutions and their free land grants. During the course of discussion on the ruler-ruled relations, Kalhana draws upon information about a wide variety of taxes, exactions and levies including forced labour, the *rudhabarodhi* signifying the broad coverage that Kalhana gave to the narration of different facets of life in ancient Kashmir. Because of this extensive range of subject matter, Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* was translated from Sanskrit into Persian, under the title of *Bahr-ul Asmar*, by Mulla Ahmad at the behest of Sultan Zainul Abidin (15th century). However, its language being difficult and archaic, it was retranslated into simple Persian by Mulla Abdul Qadir Badauni under the orders of Mughal Emperor Akbar in the 16th century. Subsequently its English translation was rendered by M.A. Stein in 2 volumes.

Jonaraja

Jonaraja joined the rank of Kashmiri Pandit historiographers when in 1459, he took upon himself the task of carrying forward Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* under the title, *Dvitiya Rajatarangini,* and at the behest of Sultan Zainul Abidin of Kashmir (1420-70 AD). Jonaraja's *Rajatarangini* uses conjecture to describe the events leading to the ascension and descension of different kings on the throne of Kashmir: Jayasimha, Jagadeva, Sang Ramadev, Lakhshmanadeva, Simhadeva, Suhadeva, Udyandeva, Allaudin, Shihab-ud Din, Qutub-ud Din, Sikander and Zainul Abidin. It also dilates upon the state's relations with clans like the *Lavanyas* (Lone), *Magreys*, *Bhats*, *Dars*, *Chaks* and other native "land barons" of medieval Kashmir. His account is not evenly deficient as regards the working of different religious institutions and their landed grants for their maintenance. The discussion on the great iconoclast, Sultan Sikander, and the most progressive Kashmiri ruler, Sultan Zainul Abidin, is quite revealing if not true by all means. Despite this, Jonaraja's book serves as a live channel of debate on the factors underlying the termination of the Hindu rule and the establishment of the Muslim rule in Kashmir.

Shrivara, Shuka and Prajyabhatta

From 1459 till 1586 AD, the captioned book was continued by Jonaraja's pupil, Shrivara under the title, *Rajavalipatak* and later by Shuka and Prajyabhatta under the title *Chaturtha Rajatarangini*. All the three versions of Shrivara, Shuka and Prajyabhatta represent an addition to the whole body of historical literature on diverse subjects of Kashmir history, polity, economy and society during the *Sultanate*. The measures taken by Sultan Zainul Abidin for agricultural and industrial development and the promotion of a secular religious thought are stated in Srivara's book and so are the events related to power scramble

between the sons of Sultan Zainul Abidin and the native chieftains, the *Chaks*, *Dars*, *Magrays*, *Lavanayas* etc. Like Shrivara, the works of Shuka and Prajyabhatta mostly hover round political developments related to infighting among native chiefs and their subsequent wars with the imperial Mughal forces for political domination. Interestingly, all the three works of Kalhana's successors recognize the inbuilt weaknesses of the local chieftains as a major factor in Mughal occupation of Kashmir in 1586 AD. Apart from politics, these Sanskrit works of Kashmiri Pandit historiographers take cognizance of the Kashmir society, its multilayered structure including of course economic and cultural structure. They also account for the factors pre-empting the construction of the "Naagar Nagar Fort" and the outbreak of the "Yadgar Episode", the powerful revolt of *mansabdars* under Mirza Yadgar during Akbar's reign in Kashmir.

While the works of the above mentioned Kashmiri Pandit historiographers, Jonaraja, Shrivara, Shuka and Prajyabhatta, are blessed with several qualifications, these are not devoid of shortfalls: one being their bias for their Pandit brethren. As a consequence, they blew out of proportion motives behind every measure that the state essentially took for the purpose of the welfare of the public at large. At times, they make an issue of these acts due to their vested interests as they belonged to the religious class of the Brahmins. In the process, they condemned Sultan Sikander on the one hand and admired his son, Sultan Zainul Abidin on the other: in one case, they lost privileges and in another they regained them. This way, their approach to historical development seems to be slightly unmethodical. But this does not trivialise their works as they are rich sources of historical information and stimulate Hindu-Muslim fraternity within a composite cultural framework – a reality that the later Muslim medieval chroniclers like Haidar Malik Chadoora, Muhammad Azam Diddamari, Sa'dullah Shahabadi, Khalil Mirjanpuri, Gh.Nabi Khanyari, and Hassan Shah Khoihami, acknowledged in their respective works : *Ta'rikh-i-Kashmir* (1620-21 AD), *Waqiat-i-Kashmir* (1746-47 AD), *Bagh-i-Sulaiman* (1787-93 AD), *Ta'rikh-i Kashmir* (1846-57 AD), *Wajiz-ut Tawari'kh* (1893 AD) and *Ta'rikh-i Hassan* (20th century) respectively. Even later day Pandit historiographers, Nath Pandit, Birbal Kachru and Narain Koul Ajiz, accorded a dignified space to the writings of their predecessors. This is amply clear from the great deal of influence they show of Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* and its sequel by Jonaraja, Shrivara, Shuka and Prajyabhatta the similarity of style, content, methods and historical tools.

Nath Pandit

Nath Pandit was yet another eminent Kashmiri historiographer who registered his debut by composing a rich piece of Persian work, the *Gulshan-i Dastur*, towards the beginning of the Afghan rule in Kashmir (1754-55 AD). It deals with the history of man from the advent of Adam down to the reign of Ahmad Shah Durrani in Kashmir. Despite being

a non-Muslim, Nath Pandit appreciated the great prophets of Islam and revered Sufi saints of Kashmir. He also describes the Valley as a "terrestrial paradise" imbued with several fascinating features, the complex geo-physical phenomena like its lofty mountains, dense forests, shimmering springs, streams and rivers, tall trees, medicinal plants, enchanting flowers, precious fruits and other agricultural products. He describes the Valley as composed of two broad administrative divisions, *Maraz* and *Kamraz*, comprising countless villages and towns and mentions its capital city, Srinagar, as the most beautiful abode with its imperial gardens, archaeological sites and medieval bazars with rich traders and merchants, traditional crafts and arts. The city was accordingly clustered with innumerable houses located across each other both horizontally and vertically. These belonged to members of the nobility, merchant communities, lawyers, artisans, craftsmen, officials etc. the latter having different cadres who, in lieu of their services, were paid on "monthly basis" and were reimbursed either in cash or in revenue assignments in a village or part thereof. Initially estimated in rupees and *dams*, their salary was disbursed in *kharwars* of paddy, the then standard currency, at the two types of conversion rates: one fixed for the whole year and another for each month of the year. This was done to regulaie fluctuating prices resulting from the discrepancy between supply and demand and changing seasons and times. Nath Pandit also recorded information on different units of weight (*kharawar, trak, seer, tola, s'aa* and *sarkha*), measurement (*bigha, gaz, assaiee, dand, kroh* and *duree*), currency (*tanka* and *dam*), time (*droh, dum, lumha, lahaz, ghari, yum, mah* and *s'aal*) and revenue functionaries, the *patwari, qanungo, muqaddam, chaudhuri, peshkar, zamindar* etc. He also wielded his pen on numerous taxes, exactions, levies and the subjects like per-unit crop yields, magnitude of land revenue, mode of its payment and collection, *jagirdari* and *ijaradari* systems. More so, he describes in details various rights of the private persons on *khud kashta, jagir* and *khalisa* lands. Further, he appreciates the Mughal rule as symbolizing justice, peace and prosperity and reflection of "God on Earth". On the other hand, he condemns Afghan rule and terms it as the "scourge of God on earth". The people would shudder on hearing the name of Afghan courts, he observes but at the same time admires the reign of the Afghan governor, Sukhjiwan Mal and equates it with the reign of *Nawshirwan-i Adil.* Thus, Nath Pandit's *Gulshan-i Dastur* is a real addition to the treasure of historical literature and meets the standards of good historiography.

Narain Koul Ajiz

Pandit Narain Koul Ajiz is the next chronicler who has made valuable contribution to the historical literature on Kashmir. He composed an invaluable Persian work, *Muntakhabut-at Tawarikh* in 1710 AD at the behest of the Mughal governor, Arif Khan. It commences with a description of the history of Kashmir from early times and goes down to the later Mughal period. The work depicts in detail the charming physical features of Kashmir and

informs us about the number of villages constituting various *parganas*. This is besides the description by the chronicler of Kashmir's agrarian and industrial relations and the ties of the Mughal state with the neighbouring chieftains. Indisputably therefore, Narain Koul's *Muntakhabut-at Tawarikh* represents a real specimen of objectivity and is an abridgment of former Persian works such as *Baharistan-i Shahi* (Anonymous) and *Ta'rikh-i Kashmir* of Haider Malik Chadoora.

Birbal Kachru

He is followed by yet another Kashmiri Pandit historiographer Pandit Birbal Kachru who authored *Majmu'at-ut Tawarikhi* in Persian in around 1835-36 AD. Its style, content, technique and method adheres to the principles of historiography and that way, it is a valuable addition to the body of historical literature available on the 19th century Kashmir. It too begins with the early history of Kashmir for which it draws upon information provided by earliest Sanskrit and Persian works. To it, he adds his own information on the contemporary Kashmir history and culture. For this, his work can be regarded as a useful source of Kashmir's history along with its polity, economy and society during the periods of Sultans, Mughals, Afghans and Sikhs. It narrates political developments in a proper chronological order and corroborates his observations with other contemporary works. The chronicler's description of geography, climate, fauna and flora, *zamindars, jagirdars, mansabdars*, nobility, floods, famines, earthquakes and their devastating effect on the people of the Valley, form the central feature of Kachru's monumental work. The role of the exploitative classes, the ruling elite, grain dealers and other hoarding groups also engage Birbal Kachru's attention in the *Majmu'at-ut Tawarikhi*. Drawing comparisons between native and alien rulers, the chronicler terms the Afghan rule as ruthless and unjust. He castigates their taxation policy as it was oriented towards draining the resources from Kashmir to Kabul which eventually subjected the masses, both Hindus and Muslims, to extreme exploitation and poverty. Kachru's account remains a significant contribution to Kashmir historiography of the medieval period.

To conclude, it can be said that the contribution of Kashmiri Pandit historiographers is too immense to be scaled by any measure. It were they who started the process of exploring facts about Kashmir history from early times and analyzing these along systematic lines. While doing so, they strived to be as honest and transparent as possible. Nevertheless, a certain degree of subjectivity did overtake them while recording facts partly because of their association with the Brahmin community. But that, however, does not undervalue the significance of their invaluable works on Kashmir history, art, culture, religion etc. In this manner, they bequeathed a rich treasure of historical literature which was significant on two counts: one, it sensitized the future writers to the essentials of historiography and second, it helped in forging unity between the Kashmiri Pandits and Muslims.

CHAPTER 8

Shrines and Pilgrimage Places

K. Warikoo

Nestled in the lap of the majestic Himalayas, Kashmir has been aptly described as a terrestrial paradise for its stunning natural beauty. Yet the valley is much more than a show-window of nature's beauties and bounties. It is a sacred land, the playground of gods, the cradle of a glorious civilization that took its birth on the banks of the river Vitasta in the dawn of pre-history when various ethnic groups including the Nagas and the Aryans mixed and co-mingled. Living in perfect harmony with their natural surroundings, ancient Kashmiris with their pantheistic imagination associated every charming spring, every shimmering lake, every majestic mountain peak, every hill and dale of this enchanting valley with one legend or other. Endowed with profound aesthetic sense, they had intimations of immortality in the scenic splendour of these spots and were inspired to view them as manifestations of the Divine. The *Nilamata Purana*, a sixth century Sanskrit text which gives us earliest glimpses of Kashmir's religious and social life, describes the land as the very embodiment of Goddess Umâ. No wonder, therefore, that numerous places in the valley are invested with religious sanctity and places of worship and pilgrimage dot it from one end to the other. It is around these sacred sanctuaries that spiritual culture and heritage of Kashmiri Pandits revolves.

In and around the capital city Srinagar itself spires and domes of numerous religious places vie with each other for space and invite their devotees to congregate and offer worship. At one end of the city the holy hillock of Hari Parbat (In Sanskrit, *Shārikā Parvata*) raises its head conspicuously, casting its reflection in the pink lotus-studded Dal Lake. Revered as the abode of the Goddess Shārikā, a manifestation of the eighteen-

armed Durgā or Tripurasundarī, the hillock is associated with Kashmir's creation myth. As the legend goes, Durga, the Divine Mother, took the form of *shārikā* or a starling (in Kashmiri, *hār* in Sanskrit *shārikā*) and carrying a pebble in her peak, dropped it on the demon Jalodbhava. The pebble grew into a mountain and crushed the demon, saving the valley from his depredations. Since then the benign Goddess is worshipped in the form of a rock which is daubed with vermilion and occupies the middle part of the western hill facing the city. Regarded as the presiding deity of Srinagar city, Goddess Shārikā is represented by a *svayambhû* or naturally engraved *shrīchakra* on a rock, giving the holy shrine the appellation of *Chakreshvarī* or the main deity at the centre of a circle of deities. The Shārikā Devī shrine was also known as *Pradyumna Pītha* or *Siddhapītha*. The main temple of the Goddess is approached from the compound known as *Devī Âñgan* and is surrounded by a number of places sacred to a whole array of deities who are believed to have taken their abodes on the rocks located on its circumambulation circuit and obeisance to whom is also regarded as essential. The first of these to be worshipped before entering the main temple is Mahāganesha, the remover of all obstacles whose name is invoked before starting any auspicious work, his shrine being called *Ganeshun* in local parlance. Then there are the sacred rocks representing the *Saptarishi* or the Seven Sages beside a Chinar tree. Next there was a shrine where the Goddess Kālī represented by a rock was worshipped besides the temples dedicated to the worship of Tripura Sundarī, Siddha Lakshmī, Shitalā Devī and other deities. Most of these have been desecrated, vandalized or appropriated since the outbreak of terrorism. Not very long ago devout Kashmiri Pandits would walk on foot every morning from different parts of the city and circumambulate the holy Hari Parbat to pay obeisance to Shārikā Devī and other deities.

In fact, Hari Parbat with its inspiring environs has been a place of great sanctity for people belonging to different faiths and creeds, which has made it a focal point of Kashmir's cultural heritage. This is further proved by Gurudwara Chhatti Padshahi built on its foothills to commemorate the visit of the sixth Sikh Guru, Hargovind Saheb to Kashmir. It was in the summer of 1620 AD that the Guru came to Srinagar to spread the holy message of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith. A *Manji* or the seat of Sikh mission was established at Srinagar in Guru Amar Das's time. The contemporary incumbent incharge of the *Manji* at that time was Sewa Das. His old mother, Mata Bhagbhari had sewn a gown for the Guru, with her own hands. She cherished a wish that the Guru should wear it in front of her eyes. It was the magnetism of Mata Bhagbhari which drew Guru Hargovind Saheb to Kashmir. On reaching Srinagar, the Guru met Sewa Das and many more Kashmiri devotees. When Mata Bhagbari touched the feet of the Guru, he asked her to bring the gown she had made for him. The joy of Mata Bhagbhari knew no bounds, when the Guru put on the gown. The Guru, during his stay in Srinagar for nearly three months, held congregations, delivered discourses and left the place only after

conducting the last rites of Mata Bhagbhari and thus immortalised her. The place where Guru Hargovind Saheb stayed during his sojourn in Kashmir was later converted into a Gurudwara, known as Chhatti Padshahi. The notes of Gurbani float in the air from this Gurudwara every morning making the atmosphere pure and sacred.

On the last stretch of the *parikramā* route (circumambulation circuit) of Hari Parbat is the shrine of Pokhribal, which today lies neglected and forgotten. History tells us that when King Pravara Sen II laid the foundations of Srinagar city, he built several shrines around the Hari Parbat hill, this temple being one of them. Hardly any devotees come to offer worship to the image of the Divine Mother Rāgnyā Devī that stands in the middle of a tank here. The place no longer reverberates with holy chants as it used to in the past when *yajñas* were performed on *ashtamīs* of bright fortnights and other sacred dates.

Another sacred place that dominates the landscape in Srinagar is the Shankaracharya Hill surmounted by an ancient temple bearing the same name. The summit of the hill commands a magnificent view of the Dal Lake and the entire city down below that simply takes ones breath away. The temple itself at the apex induces a "sense sublime of something immense, immortal and eternal". Though there are conflicting views about the date to which the temple can be assigned, the original nomenclature of the hill was undoubtedly Gopādri, "Shankaracharya" being a name given later to it later. It was on the summit of this hill, Kalhana tells us, that King Gopaditya originally constructed the temple of Jyeshtha Rudra in about 371 BC. The present temple seems to have been raised on the base of this old structure and is datable to the 6^{th} or 7^{th} century AD on the basis of its architectural style. There is a strong tradition among Kashmiri Hindus that the great philosopher Shankaracharya visited Kashmir and meditated on this hill. Legend has it that at the time of his visit he did not believe in Shakti whose cult was dominant in Kashmir. He is believed to have lost a religious debate on the issue with a Kashmiri Brahmin lady, after which he wrote the *Saundarya Laharī*, a beautiful hymnal work in praise of Shakti. According to legend, he composed this hymn, a masterpiece of Sanskrit literature, atop the hill. The Pandits of Kashmir, however, greatly admired Shankaracharya's knowledge and accepted him as a religious scholar of the highest order at the Sharada temple which he is said to have visited. They also honoured him by dedicating both the Gopādri hill and the Jyeshtha Rudra temple to him which ever since bear his name.

The Shankaracharya temple rises on a richly corniced platform from the centre of a high octagonal plinth built of large blocks of dressed stones and is approached by a long flight of stairs flanked by two side walls. The sanctum is externally square and internally circular with an arched entrance and a steep pediment at the top. Within it is placed on a quadrangular platform a magnificent *Shivalinga* of polished black stone. The plinth is surmounted by a low parapet wall adorned by a range of round-headed recesses enclosed in rectangular panels. The temple had originally a high pyramidal roof but now the upper

part of its *shikhara* has disappeared and it has a dome-shaped ceiling. There is evidence of the Shankaracharya temple having undergone repairs during Mughal and Sikh periods. Besides the devotees thronging to it in wee hours everyday to offer worship, a special festival is held here on the *Shrāvan Pûrnimā* or the full moon day of the bright fortnight of the month of *Shrāvan* (July-August).

Traditionally, a large number of Hindu temples in Srinagar have been located on the banks of the river Vitasta, present day Jhelum. There was a time when the high and shining golden *kalashas* of these temples radiated an aura of divinity over the whole city. Though many of them, as for instance, the Ganpatyar, Somyar, Drabiyar and Raghunath temples, have survived the vicissitudes of time, their very existence is endangered. Almost all these temples are in a state of neglect and ruin, posing a serious threat to the centuries old indigenous heritage of Kashmir. The ancient temple of the goddess Mahakali in the vicinity of the shrine of Shah Hamadan is a living example.

On the right bank of the river Jhelum, is the Ashram of Bhagwan Gopi Nath, which is taken care of by some of his devotees still resident in Srinagar. There was a time when the sound of *Aarti* (prayers) used to reverberate in the atmosphere all around this place. Today there is silence everywhere. Bhagwan Gopi Nath, the most revered among the saints of the 20th century in Kashmir, was born on 3 July 1898 in Bhana Mohalla, Srinagar (Kashmir) and passed away in Chandpura, Srinagar on 28 May 1968. Born in a respectable family of Kashmir Pandits, he took to spiritual pursuits at an early age and from 1925 onwards plunged headlong in his quest for self-realisation. He had mastery over Sanskrit, Persian and Urdu. He remained a celibate, spoke little and shrouded himself in a cloak of anonymity. Gopi Nath shunned publicity and lived in close communion with unseen forces. He was compassionate towards the needy and those in distress. Only those who were fortunate enough, came in contact with him and had glimpses of his greatness. It was in the later years of his life that his fame began to spread and Sadhus and saints from outside Kashmir started visiting him. This Ashram which has a marble statue of Gopi Nath, stands testimony to the unflinching faith of Kashmiri Pandits in the divine aura exuded in the Valley and by its mystics.

Devotion to the Supreme Reality as Divine Mother is deeply entrenched in the psyche of the Kashmiri Pandits who have been ardent followers of the cult of Shakti since very early times. Every Pandit family worships one or the other manifestation of the Mother Goddess Durga as its personal deity, be it Mahārājnī, Shārikā, Mahākālī, Tripurā, Jwālā, Bālā or Jyeshthā. Of these Mahārājnī, or Mahārāgnyā as she is locally called, resides in the very heart of most of the Kashmiri Pandits, with the temple and spring dedicated to her at Tulmul, a village near Gandherbal, about 25 kms from Srinagar, being regarded as the most important Hindu pilgrimage place in Kashmir with the exception of Amarnath. Tulmul finds mention as an important place of pilgrimage in the *Rajatarangini*

and some later historical chronicles. *Jyeshtha Ashtamī* or the eighth of the bright fortnight of the lunar month of Jyeshtha (May-June) is the most important day in the Hindu religious almanac for offering worship to the Goddess when a great annual festival is held to celebrate her first appearance (*prādurbhāva*) at the sacred spot. Devotees from far and near congregate here on that day and after taking a holy dip in the rivulet flowing within the sacred shrine offer their prayers at the sanctum sanctorum. Swayed by deep faith they chant hymns and sing devotional songs, waving earthen lamps and making offerings of flowers, *mentha sylvestris* leaves (*vena*), sugar candy and milk to the sacred spring of the Divine Mother. The sacred image of the Goddess covered by parasols is placed inside a white marble temple which was built by Maharaja Pratap Singh in 1912 on an islet in the centre of the holy spring which is shaped like OM in the Sharada script. The temple stands on the base of an earlier temple predating this millennium. There was, however, a time when there was no temple and the Goddess was offered worship beneath a mulberry tree. The most miraculous thing about the holy spring is that its water changes colour from time to time. It is azure blue when the times are auspicious and turns black when disaster is impending.

The Goddess Kshīr Bhavānī is also worshipped at several other places in Kashmir like Manzgam, Tikker, Logripura, Raithan and Mirhama, but the shrine at Tulmul remains the main attraction for devotees and pilgrims. Tulmul finds mention in the *Rajatarangini* and other chronicles of Kashmir as an important ancient *tīrtha* (place of pilgrimage). Not many years ago local people would make excursions to this place in large boats and stay here for days on. Attracted by its peaceful and divine ambience, several saints have meditated at this serene sacred place surrounded by magnificent Chinar trees. Swami Vivekananda visited it twice and worshipped here, performing a *havan* and offering a large quantity of *khīr* flavoured with almonds. He later revealed to his disciples that he had an unusual mystical experience here in which the Divine Mother appeared before him in vision. Even in the present circumstances when Kashmiri Pandits have fled Kashmir en masse due to terrorist violence, thousands of devotees continue to throng it especially during the annual festivals of *Jyeshtha* and *Ashādha Ashtamī*, presenting a living example of faith overcoming terror. The festivals had in fact become an integral part of Kashmiri socio-religious life prior to exodus of the Pandits. Surrounded by magnificent Chinar trees, this holy shrine is a living example of the continuous and uninterrupted spiritual quest of the people of Kashmir.

Another popular place of religious significance for the Hindus of Kashmir is the holy shrine of Jwālā Bhagvatī, the Goddess of Fire perched on a hillock located in Khrew, the ancient *Khaduvī*, a small town about 20 kms. from Srinagar. The hillock is presumably volcanic with a two feet high flame representing the Goddess who is revered as a manifestation of Shakti, the Divine Mother. Quite a large number of Pandit families

consider her as their *ishtadevī* or personal deity. Though there was an ancient temple enshrining the eternal flame, it is no where in existence now. The present temple is an 18th century construction approachable by a flight of about 360 stone steps. There is a beautiful spring on the hillock where the devotees take a holy dip before offering worship at the shrine. Not long ago, on *Jwālā Chaturdashī*, the 14th day of the bright fortnight of *Ashādha* (June-July), a fair was held here attracting a large number of devotees, who offered meat and yellow rice as sacrificial food to the deity. The holy shrine where *jwālā* or the eternal flame would remain alighted all the time illuminating the hearts of the devotees is virtually an abandoned place now.

Perched on a slope of the Zabarwan hill between the Shankaracharya hill and Chashmashahi, southwest to the Gagribal part of the Dal Lake, is an ancient pilgrimage place locally known as *Zeethair* sacred to Jyeshthā, a manifestation of the Goddess Pārvatī. Located here amidst enchanting scenic beauty exuding a divine ambience is a spring dedicated to the goddess, drawing devotees from all over Kashmir, particularly on Thursdays regarded sacred to her. According to a legend given in the *Jyeshthāmāhātmya*, a Sanskrit text glorifying the holy spot, Shiva rescued Jyeshthā here from the *daityas* and married her taking the name of Jyeshthesha. A lingam known as Shiva Jyeshthesha was also enshrined here alongside the spring and worshipped since ancient times. The ancient lingam was destroyed by Sikandar the Iconoclast and was later replaced by a different one. An annual fair was held here on the *Shrīpañchamī* day in the month of *Vaishākha* (April-May) and continues to be held even in the present disturbed conditions in Kashmir.

Ten kilometers from the centre of Srinagar city lies the historic place of Vicharnag. This place is a living testimony to the times when Nagas and Pishachas lived together in Kashmir. Even today the Shiva temple and water springs, known as Nagas in Sanskrit, remind one of the times when there was peace and harmony in Kashmir. It was this place where famous physician Shri Bhat, responsible for the change of heart of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, later known as Budshah, the Great Monarch, lived. Another important personality, Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Rishi also stayed here for a brief period. An annual festival used to be held here on the last day of the Kashmiri calendar, i.e., *Chaitra Amavasya*.

The village Balhama named after the Goddess Bala Devi is thirteen kilometers from Srinagar and is surrounded by village Wuyan in the east, Khanmoh and Zewan in the north and Pampore in the west. Around the shrine of Bala Devi are twelve brick pillars covered with galvanised iron sheets. The space in between the pillars is fenced with grills. Around the five sacred deodar trees in the shrine are twenty stone idols of gods and goddesses. Painted with vermillion, these idols are of old times. There is also a Shiv Lingam in the shrine. There is a spring on the foothill which has a number of small temples surrounding it. Bala Devi is the presiding deity of the erstwhile Dogra rulers of J&K State. Prior to 1990, hordes of pilgrims would visit this shrine and seek the

benevolence of the Devi. The idols inside the shrine are well known for their distinctive geometrical design, which is as old as the tradition of Hindu architecture in Kashmir, the influences of which can be seen in all Sufi shrines, Hindu shrines and even the old mosques of Kashmir. The *tīrthas* of Bhadrakālī near Handwara and Kulavāgeshwarī at Kulgam – the town derives its name from it – are two more among the numerous examples testifying to the popularity of the Shakti cult in Kashmir.

Swami Lakshaman Joo's Ashram at Ishber has been the centre of Shaivite thought, where a lot of work was done on the Trika philosophy of Kashmir. As a great *yogi*, he embodied a rare unity of a mystic and a Pandit, being well-versed in Sanskrit and in the texts of the non-dualistic tradition of Kashmir Shaivism. He was also called the Abhinavagupta of the 20th century, being the last living authority on Kashmir Shaivism, who was teaching scholars and guiding seekers on the spiritual path. He edited several Sanskrit texts and published Hindi translations and commentaries. Pilgrims and students of theology and Shaivism from all parts of the world used to visit this place for learning till late 1980s when terrorism became order of the day in Kashmir. Today this Ashram too is engulfed in silence. History bears testimony to the fact that many attempts have been made to strangulate the great traditions of learning in Kashmir. But its resilience and strength has survived numerous attacks of religious zealots.

Awantipur was founded by King Awantivarman, the ruler of Kashmir from 855 to 883 AD. Situated at a distance of 18 miles from Srinagar on the Anantnag road, the site has two temples. The larger one, Shiva-Awantishvara, is marked by massive walls some half a mile beneath the town on the outskirts of village Jaubror. The subsidiary shrines are to the rear corner of the courtyard. But the complex has, over the years, lost its grandeur and has been reduced to ruins. These ruins only present a striking contrast to the glory of Hinduism in ancient Kashmir with its near decimation in present day Kashmir. The modern and grand building of Muslim mosque cum *madrassa* adjoining the Awantipur ruins, and the shrine of Syed Hassan Muntaqi situated just opposite the Awantipur temple on the National Highway between Jammu and Srinagar, illustrate this fact in glaring terms.

Among all the six districts of Kashmir Division of J&K State, district Anantnag is quite well known for its tourist spots as well as places of religious significance. Of these, Bijbehara is historically the most significant one. Many centuries ago there was a famous university located at this place where students from different places came to learn under the most respected scholars of the time. The town of Bijbehara or Vijbror is 28 miles from Srinagar and two and a half miles from district headquarters, Anantnag. Vijbror is derived from Vijayeshwar and it was the site of an ancient sacred shrine of Shiva Vijayeshvara. The site was one of the famous *tirthas* of Kashmir. The place has a hoary past and king Asoka, as per the account of Kalhana, replaced the stuccoes enclosure of

the Shiva Vijayeshvara temple with that of stone. The king built two temples within this enclosure called Asokeshvara. The temple and the ancient linga of Vijayeshvara were completely destroyed by Sultan Sikander. The temple is made up of stone and stands on an 8 feet high *adhistana*. Instead of the pyramidal roof, the stylized ancient architecture of Kashmir, it has a curvilinear roof, which was adopted by the Dogras from the temple architecture of north Indian plains. Three golden *Kalshas* and a pointed spire surmount the temple. The temple has a circumabulatory path. Inside the temple there is a *pitha* having eleven lingas called Ekadash Rudr, which is the main *pitha* for worship. Besides, there is a two feet high idol of Ganesha.

On the route to Pahalgam, Mattan is an important pilgrimage place of the Hindus. A huge spring gushes out here from the base of a hill. Thousands of fish frolicking in the crystal clear waters of its sacred spring have been attracting pilgrims since ancient times. Both Hindus and Muslims of the valley tenaciously observe the old tradition of not disturbing or catching these fish which are considered to be sacred. Mattan is also an important place for the pilgrims heading towards Amarnath cave. Its importance is also due to the fact that the members of the Kashmir Pandit community used to perform the *Shraadha* ceremony of their forefathers at this place. However, nowadays this place wears a deserted look. Vagaries of time have forced the original inhabitants of this sacred spot to leave the land of their forefathers for the sake of their safety. Most of their houses stand burnt and destroyed. Deathly calm now prevails in this place which was once full of a vibrant population of Kashmiri Pandits. Time has given this place a haunted look. There is no movement inside these once chirpy houses and no lamps are now lit on the door steps.

The most celebrated place of Hindu pilgrimage in Kashmir is the Amarnath cave, abode of Shiva, the Lord of Immortality. The holy cave where a natural ice *linga* forms inside waxing and waning with the phases of the moon has been the destination of pilgrims since the earliest dawn of history. Shiva, it is believed, revealed the secrets of life and immortality to his consort Pārvatī here. A pair of pigeons overheard the discourse and became immortal, as the legend says. According to another legend, Shiva distributed at this spot the nectar of immortality among the gods. Overwhelmed by devotional fervour, hundreds of thousands of people from all parts of India and even from other countries join the annual *yātrā* to the holy Amarnath cave, the Amreshwar of the ancient texts, which takes place usually in *Shrāwan* (July-August), the sacred date for *darshan* being *pūrnimā* or the full-moon day of the Hindu lunar month.

The route of the *yātrā* lies through some of the most spectacular natural scenery in the world and is covered in various stages, Pahalgam being the starting point. From there the track leads to Chandanwari, Sheshnag, Wavjan, Panjtarini till the holy cave appears in sight in all its grandeur, the whole route providing a wonderful contrast of lush green

valleys and forests and snow-capped summits of mountains. After bathing in the ice-cold waters of the sacred river Amaravati, the pilgrims are thrilled by the awe-inspiring sight of the ice *lingam*. The whole area reverberates with chants and hymns in praise of Shiva, the Lord of Immortality. Swami Vivekananda was overwhelmed by emotion when he saw the ice-Shiva at Amarnath, the great Lord Himself having appeared before him in a moment of indescribable mystic experience.

The presumption that the Amaranth Cave was discovered by chance by a shepherd of the Malik clan after lying in obscurity for thousands of years is not based on historical facts. Amarnath or Amreshwar of the sacred texts like the *Bhringīsha Samhitā* and *Amreshwar Māhātmya* was a well known place of pilgrimage since very early times. Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* and several other historical chronicles and travellers' accounts provide conclusive evidence that the ice-*lingam* inside the holy cave was a regular destination of pilgrims through the centuries. Besides, there have been several trek routes to the pilgrimage spot, the trek from Baltal being one of the preferred short routes even today. The number of pilgrims visiting Amarnath has swelled to several lakhs now in spite of several lives having been lost due to terrorist attacks in the recent past.

So numerous are sites of ancient local worship in Kashmir, that Kalhana's claim of there being no space in the land even as wide as a sesame seed bereft of a *tīrtha*, does not at all look like an exaggeration. Surely, we can't expect to enumerate all of them in the space of a small paper. Among the mountain peaks invested by Kashmiri Hindus with a halo of divinity perhaps the most fascinating and majestic is Mount Harmukh rising five thousand feet above the stunningly beautiful Gangabal Lake, which itself is a place of pilgrimage held as sacred by them as Hardwar. Harmukh, literally means "the Face of Lord Shiva". The Mount with its jagged peaks and snow-covered precipices spread like matted locks actually looks like Lord Shiva's face in its grandeur, inspiring great awe and reverence. Not so many years ago pilgrims from different parts of the Valley braving arduous terrain and often treacherous weather, would visit Gangabal via Kangan or Sonamarg to immerse the ashes of the dead in its holy waters. The changing colours of the Lake and the varying hues of floral beauty of its surroundings present a sight that can be described as nothing less than divine for the spell it casts.

Gangabal is situated on the hills of Harmukh range in northeast of Kashmir, at a height of 12,000 ft. It is surrounded in abundance by natural beauty. It is also the abode of Lord Shiva from whose hair locks (*jattas*), the Holy Ganga flows down forming a divine lake. This is centuries old pilgrimage center of Kashmiri Pandits. It is on the Ganderbal-Sonamarg road, the last village Wusan is about 20 kms. from Srinagar, there onwards the hilly track is to be covered on foot. Ramradhan is the first pilgrimage center about 5 kms from Wusan. Onward journey to Yam Haer is about 6 kms. It is a steep ladder like path, perhaps that is why it is called Yam Hear (Lord Yama's ladder). After

covering it, there is a lake with black water known as 'Bramsaar'. This lake has also divine sanctity. Another stop is at Hamsdar, a beautiful place surrounded by snow clad mountains, and is known as gateway of Gangabal. It is now a steep journey towards Sukh Nag, a hot water lake, and then to Dukh Nag, a cold water lake. Pilgrims take bath in both these lakes and proceed finally to Gangabal Lake, which is just 5 kms away from this place. Gangabal is also called Karmukat Ganga and this place is believed to be as pious as Haridwar. The pilgrims perform *shradh* and immerse the ashes of their dead here. As the legend goes, pilgrims seek for the salvation of the souls of their deceased and pray for their own welfare. The water of this lake is pure and clean but surprisingly after the immersion of the ashes, all of a sudden a large number of insects appear on the surface of lake thus making water unusable at that spot.

The return journey is from different route via Naran Nag. It is on the banks of a rivulet called Krenk Nadi with beautiful temples around. Karakota King Laltaditya Muktapida enlarged and embellished the Jyesthesha and Bhutesha temples at Naran Nag. The temples made of local grey granite are situated in the midst of deep green pine forests. The Jyesthesa temple complex is on a high terrace to the west and the Bhutesa temple complex is on lower terrace. The ashes of the deceased are immersed in the Krenk Nadi as well. The pilgrims have a holy dip here as concluding part of the holy pilgrimage. Annual festival at Gangabal is held on the Ashtami of Bahadun Shulapaksh in Bhadra month, known as Ganga Ashtami.

Mount Mahadev also, not far from Srinagar, is regarded as a place for pilgrimage. It was on the picturesque foothills of this majestic mountain that the great sage Vasugupta found the *Shivasutras*, a seminal text of Kashmir Shaivism, inscribed on rock known as the Shankarpal. Swami Lakshmanjoo, the great interpreter of the non-dual Shaivite philosophy in modern times, would often visit this holy rock with his disciples and devotees and offer worship.

The ancient *tīrtha* of *Kapateshwara* near the present village of Kother, Nowgam, described by the Kashmiri poet Jayadratha in his well known poetic work *Haracaritcintāmani*, the *Kapalamocana Tirtha* in Shopiyan, the Gautam Nag spring near Anantnag, the shrine of Uma Nagari, the *Trisandhyā tīrtha* where water gushes out intermittently three times a day and as many times in the night during certain parts of the year, the shrine of Kulavageshwari at Kulgam, the *Gangobheda Tirtha* sacred to the Goddess of speech, Saraswati, the confluence of Vitasta and Sindhu at Shadipur known more popularly as *Sangam* or *Prayāg*, the Bhadrakālī shrine, the holy shrine at Sadhuganga, the ancient temples at *Vijayeshwara* (modern *Vejibror*) and an array of many more Hindu places of worship are among those that are in shambles today.

Shāradā, once regarded the most important Hindu place of pilgrimage in Kashmir now lies on the other side of the LOC, yet no discussion on the shrines and holy places

of Kashmir can be complete without mentioning it. The remains of this once magnificent shrine in the Kishanganga valley in the part of Kashmir that is presently under the illegal occupation of Pakistan reveal a sad story of religious intolerance. There was a time when pilgrims from not only Kashmir but different parts of India would throng to this spot to seek blessings of the Goddess of Wisdom, the pilgrimage taking place on the 4th day of the bright fortnight of *Bhādrapada* (September-October) every year or on *Gangāshtamī* on each alternate year. The ruins of the ancient stone temple enshrining the idol of the goddess show that it had all the typical features of Kashmiri temple architecture, except the pyramidal roof which, according to an account, had got blown off in an explosion of gunpowder which was stored inside it by the Muslim Rajas of Karnah just before the advent of the Sikh rule. The Brahmins of Kashmir, according to Stein had by then forgotten the importance of the shrine, its sanctity being restored in the Dogra Maharaja Gulab Singh'*s* time.

Kalhana mentions the *Śārdātīrtha* as one which attracted devotees from as far as *Gauda* (Bengal), while the *Bhringīśasamhitā* and the *Śāradā Māhātmya* describe its location and religious importance. According to Jonaraja, king Zain-ul-Abidin went on a pilgrimage to the holy shrine but could not have *darshan* of the miraculous wooden idol. Legend has it that a large library was attached to the temple in ancient times which was consulted by scholars from all over India. However, while its renown had undoubtedly spread far and wide, it would be wrong to say that a Nalanda or Taxila type university existed at the place. Today, thousands of Kashmiri Pandits continue to rever this shrine and its goddess, longing to visit the place.

Kashmir has been a cradle of spiritual and cultural rejuvenation since time immemorial. The divine sacred places that abound in every nook and corner of Kashmir are living examples of its deep civilisational roots. Divinity flows from its lakes, waterfalls, springs, snow-clad mountains, flowers and majestic trees. The pious and sacred places of pilgrimage, which have deep roots in the socio-religious traditions of Kashmiri Pandits, are not only a great source of spiritual inspiration but also the main strength of faith and devotion. These form an inseparable part of the indigenous cultural heritage of Kashmir.

Unfortunately, during the past 20 years of violence and terrorism in Kashmir, numerous Hindu shrines, temples and their landed estates, educational/cultural institutions and properties, spread along the length and breadth of the Valley, have either been destroyed, encroached upon, occupied or illegally sold or leased out (See Appendix II). Since almost the entire Kashmiri Hindu population was forced out of the Valley in 1989-90, and which has been living in displacement in various parts of India, there are hardly any Kashmiri Hindus living in the valley to look after their shrines, temples and institutions. There have also been several cases of theft and illegal sale of rare and antique idols and artifacts of these shrines and temples. Keeping in view these harsh ground realities, there is an urgent

need to conduct a detailed survey of the Kashmiri Hindu shrines and temples and to prepare a consolidated list of their holdings, idols, artifacts, land holdings and other assets. At the same time, a Kashmiri Hindu Shrines and Religious Places Board needs to be constituted by the Jammu and Kashmir Government on the lines of Mata Vaishno Devi and Shri Amarnath Shrine Boards.

One would hope that while Kashmir moves forward in its quest for peace and harmony, the newly elected State Government brings out the Draft Bill (see Appendix I), which was published on 9 January 2008, from the cold storage and enacts the requisite legislation so that these sacred shrines and temples once again regain the glory and sanctity that was once associated with them. One hopes that in a not too distant future, the dark clouds that have engulfed Kashmir in their vice like grip will give way to enlightenment and the shrines and pilgrimages of Kashmir will once again glow in the eternal light of spirituality, imparting solace and peace to the devotees. These holy shrines situated throughout the length and breadth of Kashmir valley can not only be turned into the living centres of spiritual and cultural attainments, but also act as a major source of revenue for Kashmir and its people by being an important constituent of cultural tourism in the state.

APPENDIX I

THE KASHMIRI HINDU SHRINES AND RELIGIOUS PLACES (MANAGEMENT AND REGULATION) BILL, 2008.*

[L.A. Bill No. 2 of 2008]

A Bill to provide for the better management, protection, administration and governance of Kashmiri Hindu Shrines and Religious Places in the State and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Be it enacted by the Jammu and Kashmir State Legislature in the Fifty-ninth Year of the Republic of India as follows:

CHAPTER I
Preliminary

1. Short title and commencement –

(a) This Act may be called the Kashmiri Hindu Shrines and Religious Places (Management and Regulation) Act, 2008.

(b) It shall come into force from such date as the Government may, by notification in the Government Gazette, appoint.

2. Application – Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in any other law or scheme of management, custom, or usage for the time being in force this Act shall apply to all Kashmiri Hindu Shrines and religious places in the State.

3. Definitions – In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,-

(a) 'Act' means the Kashmiri Hindu Shrines and Religious Places (Management and Regulation) Act, 2008.

(b) 'Appellate Authority' means the District Judge having territorial jurisdiction of the area concerned.

(c) 'Board' means the *Kashmiri Hindu Shrines Board* constituted under section 6 of the Act.

(d) 'Chadhawa' means offering made by the pilgrims at Kashmiri Hindu Shrines and religious places including the offerings made to anyone within the precincts of such shrines and places;

(e) 'Committee' means the District Management Committee of the area constituted under section 17;

(f) 'Endowment' means all properties, movable or immovable, belonging to or endowed for the maintenance improvement additions to, or worship in the specified

*The Draft Bill, was published in the extraordinary issue of Jammu and Kashmir Government Gazette (Vol. 12, No 40-2, 9 January 2008) under rule 64 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, by order of the then Speaker, J&K Legislative Assembly, M. Ramzan.

shrines or for the performance of any service or charity connected therewith and includes the idols installed therein, the premises of the specified shrines and gifts of property made to anyone within the precincts of the shrine and lands and buildings attached or appurtenant thereto;

(g) 'Endowment fund' means the income or revenue received or receivable on account of any specified shrine and includes all such donations, offerings and gifts as are received on behalf of, or for the benefit of any specified shrine by the Board or the Management Committee or any other person authorized by the Board or the Committee, as the case may be;

(h) 'Government' means the Government of the State of Jammu and Kashmir;

(i) 'Kashmiri Hindu' means a person professing Hindu religion, excluding Sikh as defined in section 2 of the Jammu and Kashmir Sikh Gurdwaras and Religious Endowment Act, 1973 born in Kashmir Province of the State, whether presently residing in the said province or at any other place in India and also includes those persons who are born in the families of such persons and are residing outside Kashmir Province;

Provided that the children of Kashmiri Hindus born outside the State owing to the residence of their parents outside the State on account of their employment, trade, business, occupation or otherwise shall also be treated as Kashmiri Hindus for purposes of the Act;

(j) 'Kashmiri Hindu Shrines' means the shrines, temples, ashrams, mutts, endowments, springs and hillocks and includes other religious places and shrine properties, both movable and immovable, used by Kashmiri Hindus for their worship;

(k) 'Kashmir Province' means the area included within the territorial limits of the Districts of Anantnag, Shopian, Kulgam, Pulwama, Srinagar, Budgam, Ganderbal, Baramullah, Bandipora and Kupwara;

(l) 'Management Committee' means a Management Committee constituted under sub-section (I) of Section 17;

(m) 'Prescribed' means prescribed by the bye-laws made by the Board under section 24; and

(n) 'State' means the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

CHAPTER II
Survey

4. Survey – (1) The Government may, by notification in the Government Gazette, appoint one or more Special Officers, as may be necessary, for the purpose of making a survey of Kashmiri Hindu Shrines in Kashmir Province.

(2) Such appointment may be terminated by the Government at any time.

(3) The Special Officer shall be empowered to call for any information, document or record from any Government functionary or any other person or authority, as may be considered necessary, for conducting the survey and shall have the same powers as are vested in a Civil Court under the Code of Civil Procedure, Samvat 1977 (Act X of 1977) in respect of the following matters, namely:

(a) summoning and examining of witnesses;
(b) requiring the discovery and production of any document;
(c) requisitioning any public record from any court or office;
(d) issuing commissions for the examination of witnesses or documents; and
(e) making any local inspection and investigation.

(4) The Special Officer shall, after making such inquiry as he may deem necessary, submit a report to the Government containing the following particulars in respect of Kashmiri Hindu Shrines brought under the preliminary survey:

(i) name of the shrine/religious place;
(ii) location with full address;
(iii) description of the Shrine/religious place including its property;
(iv) present status of the Shrine/place;
(v) ownership details of the Shrine property;
(vi) legal status of the organization holding the control of the Shrine/religious place and its property;
(vii) reference to the revenue records whereunder the property stands registered;
(viii) the gross income of the Shrine and its property during preceding three years; and
(ix) such other particulars relating to each Shrine/religious place as may be considered necessary to be mentioned by the Special Officer.

(5) The decision of the Special Officer whether a particular place or property is a Kashmiri Hindu Shrine shall, subject to any order made by the Appellate Authority on appeal, be final.

(6) Any person aggrieved by an order of the Special Officer may prefer an appeal to the Appellate Authority within sixty days from the date of order.

(5) Publication of list of properties – (1) On receipt of the report under sub-section (4) of section 4, the Government shall publish the preliminary report of the Special Officer in the Government Gazette or in at least two local daily newspapers having wide circulation in the area concerned to invite public objections within a period of sixty days.

(2) After considering the objections, if any received, and after affording a reasonable opportunity to every person claiming any interest in such Shrine properties, the Government shall publish a final list of the Kashmiri Hindu Shrines.

CHAPTER III

Constitution and composition of the Governing Board

6. Establishment of Shrine Board – (1) There shall be established a Kashmiri Hindu Shrine Board, which shall consist of two official members to be nominated by the Government and ten other members who shall be elected in the prescribed manner.

Provided that after the commencement of the Act, the members of the first Board shall be nominated by the Government who shall continue to function for a period of one year or till elections are conducted, whichever is earlier:

Provided further that in case it is not possible to hold the elections within the specified period, the Government shall, for reasons to be recorded in writing, authorize continuance of first Board till elections are held and the elected members assume their office.

(2) The Board shall be a body corporate and shall have a perpetual succession and a common seal and may by the said name sue or be sued.

7. Disqualification for being a member of the Board – (1) A person shall not be eligible for nomination or election as a member of the Board, if he-

(a) is not a Kashmiri Hindu;
(b) has not completed 35 years of age;
(c) is of unsound mind;
(d) is an undischarged insolvent;
(e) has been convicted of a criminal offence;
(f) is holding an office of profit under the Government of the State or the Government of India or any corporation or body established under any law for the time being in force; provided that this condition shall not apply to a nominated member.
(g) is a servant of any religious body or institution established under the Act;
(h) is a defaulter of any Kashmiri Hindu Shrine or religious place; and
(i) is not a permanent resident of the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

8. Term of office – A member of the Board shall hold office for a period of three years and shall be eligible for renomination/re-election, as the case may be.

9. Dissolution and supersession of the Board – (1) If in the opinion of the Government, the Board is not competent to perform its functions or persistently makes default in performing the functions imposed on it under the Act or exceeds or abuses its powers, the Government may, after due inquiry after after giving the Board a reasonable opportunity of being heard, by order dissolve or supersede the Board and reconstitute another Board in accordance with the Act.

(2) Where a Board is dissolved or superseded under sub-section (1) the Government shall appoint an administrator who shall perform all the functions and exercise all the powers of the Board for a period not exceeding six months or until the constitution of another Board, whichever is earlier.

10. Filling of vacancies – (1) Casual vacancies in the office of the Board shall be filled in the same manner as provided under section 6.

(2) No action taken by the Board shall be invalid by reason only of there being a casual vacancy.

11. Resignation and removal of a member – (1) Any member may resign his office by giving a notice in writing to the Board and his office shall become vacant from the date of acceptance of the same by the Board.

(2) The Government may for good and sufficient reasons remove any member of the Board after giving him a reasonable opportunity of showing cause against such removal and after considering the explanation offered therefore.

12. Office bearers of the Board – The members of the Board shall at its first general meeting elect from amongst themselves the following office bearers;-

(i) President;
(ii) Vice-President;
(iii) Secretary; ·
(iv) Treasurer;
(v) Assistant Secretary; and
(vi) Assistant Treasurer

13. Office and meetings of the Board – (1) The Board shall maintain its office at such place as the Board may decide.

(2) The President or in his absence the senior most Vice-President shall preside over the meeting of the Board.

(3) The quorum for holding a meeting shall be half of the total members excluding the President.

(4) Every decision of the Board shall be passed by a majority of the voted and in case of a tie the President shall have a casting vote or second vote.

14. Powers and duties of the Board – The powers and duties of the Board shall be to –

(a) administer, manage and regulate the Kashmiri Hindu Shrines and to preserve, protect, administer and use the properties notified under section 5;

(b) manage and administer the endowment fund in accordance with the provisions of the Act;

(c) pay salaries, allowances and perquisites and make all other payments due from the endowment fund;

(d) utilize endowment fund for upliftment of Kashmiri Hindus in the State;
(e) make provisions for relief to the indigent and the destitude;
(f) undertake development activities for the welfare of the Kashmiri Hindus in the State; and
(g) do all such other things as may be necessary to achieve the objectives of the Act.

15. Liability of members – The members of the Board shall be individually and collectively liable for the loss, waste or misappropriation of the endowment fund if such loss, waste or misappropriation is a direct consequence of his/their willful act or omission.

16. Appointment of officers and employees of the Board – (1) For efficient discharge of the functions of the Board, it may appoint such officers as it considers necessary with such designations, pay, allowances and other remuneration as the Board may, from time to time, prescribe.

(2) The Board shall have the power to transfer, suspend, remove or dismiss any employee of the Board for breach of discipline, neglect of duty or misconduct.

CHAPTER IV
Management Committees

17. Constitution of Management Committees – (1) there shall be established a Management Committee for every district of Kashmir Province consisting of nine members who shall be elected in accordance with the procedure as prescribed;

Provided that the first committee to be constituted in respect of a district after the commencement of the Act shall be nominated by the Board for a period which shall not exceed one year or till elections are held whichever is earlier.

(2) A Kashmiri Hindu who is registered as a voter for the State Legislative Assembly elections shall have a right to vote in the elections to the Management Committee of the district in which he is registered as a voter.

18. Office bearers of the Committees – The members of Management Committee shall in its first meeting elect from amongst themselves a President, a Vice-President, a Secretary and a Treasurer.

19. Disqualification for membership of Management Committee – A person shall not be eligible for nomination or election as a member of the Management Committee if he:

(a) is not a Kashmiri Hindu;
(b) has not completed 21 years of age;
(c) is of unsound mind;
(d) is an undischarged insolvent;
(e) has been convicted of a criminal offence;

(f) is holding an office of profit under the Government of the State or the Government of India or any corporation or body established under any law for the time being in force;
Provided that this condition shall not apply to a nominated member;
(g) is a servant of any religious body or institution established under this Act;
(h) does not belong to the concerned district, it being immaterial whether he is currently residing in the district or not;
(i) is a defaulter of any Kashmiri Hindu Shrine or religious place; and
(j) is not a permanent resident of the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

20. Term of office – A member of the Management Committee shall hold office for a period of three years.

21. Power, functions of the Management Committee and meeting of the Committees – (1) Subject to the overall superintendence and control of the Board, a Management Committee shall have the same functions and exercise the same powers within the jurisdiction of the district concerned as are vested in the Board under section 14.

(2) The provision of the Act relating to the meeting of the Board shall apply, *mutatis mutandis,* for conducting the meetings of the Management Committees.

CHAPTER V
Finances

22. Power to seek and receive grants, offerings and Chadawa – (1) It shall be lawful for the Board or the Management Committee or any other person authorized by the Board or the Committee in this behalf to seek and receive any donations, grants, offerings and Chadawa against proper receipt and the donations, grants, offerings and Chadawa so received shall be deposited in a fund to be known as 'Endowment Fund'.

(2) Whoever solicits or receives any donations, grants offerings and Chadawa in the name of or on behalf of the Board, or the Management Committee in contravention of the provisions of the Act shall be punishable with a fine which may extend to ten thousand rupees or double the amount received, whichever is higher.

(3) The Board shall have the power to borrow money or raise loans for carrying out the objectives of the Act from Banks, financial institutions and other corporate bodies and also the power to invest money not immediately required in such securities, bonds etc. as it may deem proper and necessary.

23. Audit – (1) The accounts of the Board and the Management Committees shall be audited and examined once in a year by a Chartered Accountant appointed by the Board for this purpose.

(2) The expenses incurred on the audit and examination of the accounts shall be paid out of the funds of the Board or the Management Committee as the case may be.

(3) The Board shall, within two month from the receipt of the Audit Report, submit it to the Government along with a explanation on the irregularities, if any, pointed out in the Report.

(4) The Government shall cause the Audit Report along with the explanation, if any, laid in each House of the State Legislature.

CHAPTER VI
Miscellaneous

24. Power to make bye-laws – (1) The Board may make bye-laws for carrying out purpose of the Act.

(2) In particular and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing powers such bye-laws may provide for –

(a) the manner and method by which elections to the Board and the Management Committees shall be conducted;
(b) the time and place, procedure and conduct of business at the meetings of the Board and the Management Committees;
(c) the facilities admissible and the allowances payable to the members of the Board and the Management Committees for attending the meetings and discharging other functions under the Act;
(d) the custody and investment of endowment fund;
(e) the form in which budget of the Board and the Management Committees shall be prepared;
(f) the form in which the details of properties of Kashmiri Hindu Shrines shall be maintained;
(g) the manner in which accounts of the Board and the Management Committees may be kept and audited;
(h) the manner of authentication of the decisions and orders of the Board; and
(i) all other matters which may be required to be prescribed for carrying out the purposes of the Act.

APPENDIX II

Government of Jammu and Kashmir
Civil Secretarial Revenue Department

Subject: Sale and Purchase of land belonging to Religious Institutions of Kashmiri Pandits in Kashmir Valley.

Govt. Order No: Rev/MR/124 of 2008dated: 16-04-2008

Whereas, during discussion in the Legislature during January 2008 it was alleged that there has been illegal sale and purchase of land belonging to various religious institutions of Kashmiri Pandits in Kashmir Valley and an assurance was given by the Govt. on the floor of the house for holding an inquiry in the matter.

Whereas, Settlement Commissioner J&K was appointed as Inquiry Officer vide Govt. Order No.: Rev/MR/37 of 2008 dated: 15-02-2008 to hold inquiry in the case.

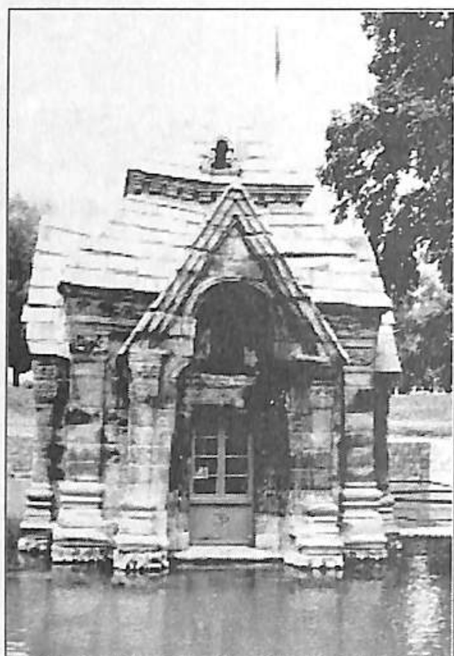
Whereas, the inquiry officer has submitted his report which reveals that there have been some violations in the process of sale and purchase of land belonging to religious institutions of Kashmiri Pandits in Kashmir Valley.

Now, therefore in order to safeguard the Shrine properties of Kashmiri Pandits in Kashmir Valley it is hereby ordered that:

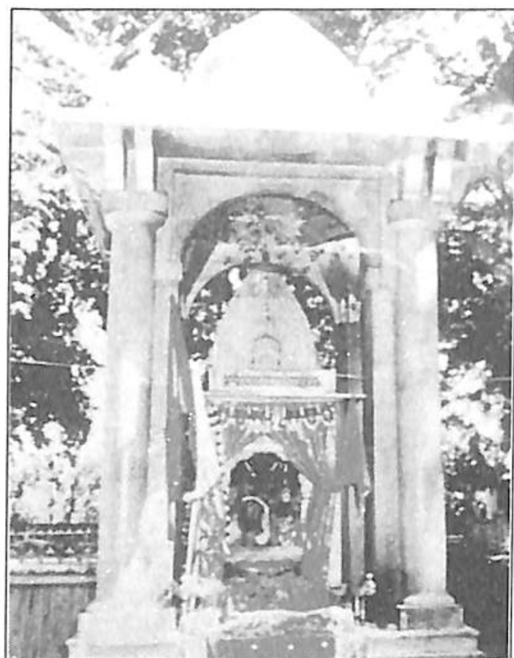
1. All the Deputy Commissioners of Kashmir will ensure that no extracts of revenue record are issued to any Mahant/Manager or their representatives for any Shrine property, without prior written permission of the concerned Deputy Commissioner.
2. The responsibly of the custody of revenue record pertaining to the Shrine properties shall be of the Tehsildar concerned who alone shall be competent to prepare an abstract of record as and when the same is directed to be issued on the orders of the Deputy Commissioner. Powers of the field staff to prepare and issue such abstract shall thus be deemed to have been withdrawn;
3. Attestation of mutation of any document of sale/lease executed by any Mahant/ Manager in respect of Shrine property with proper permission under law, shall be entered and attested by a Tehsildar only with the prior approval of the Deputy Commissioner;
4. In respect of all the mutations so far attested, the Deputy Commissioners shall carry out a *suo moto* review under section 13 of J&K Land Revenue Act read with para 104 of Standing order 23-A (Mutations) and pass appropriate orders under law in respect of these mutations within three months;

By order of the Govt. of Jammu and Kashmir.

Sd/-
(Masaud Samoon) IAS
Secretary to Govt.
Revenue Deptt.



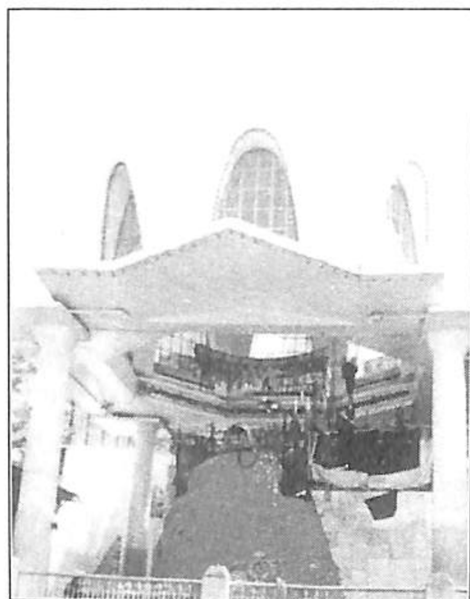
1. Pandrethan Temple (10th Century), Srinagar



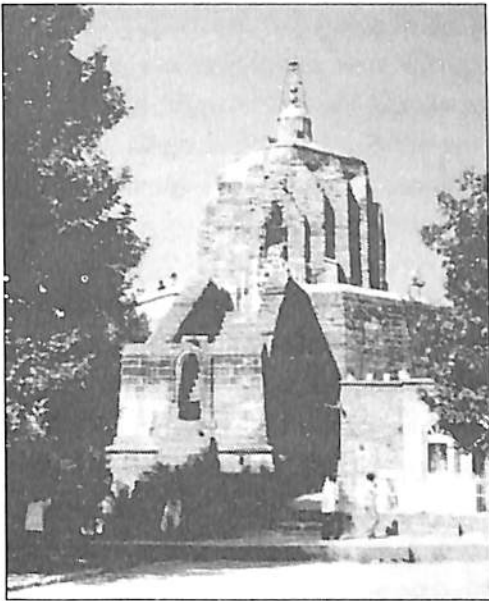
2. Khir Bhawani Temple, Tulmul



3. Khir Bhawani Temple, Tulmul



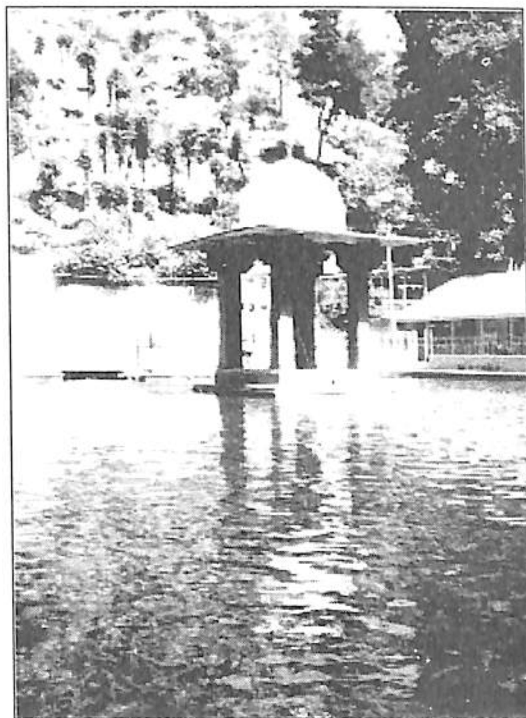
4. Chakrishwar Temple, Hari Parbat, Srinagar



5. Shankaracharya Temple, Srinagar



6. Ganptyar Temple, Srinagar



7. Mattan Temple

CHAPTER 9

Amarnath – The Abode of the God of Immortality

K. Warikoo

Since ages the Himalaya has been associated wiyh the abode of celestial beings particularly lord Shiva. The people of India have always revered the Himalayas and its mighty mountains as the secluded sanctuary for spiritual salvation. Among the thirty odd holy shrines of Lord Shiva, Kedar Nath and Amarnath are the most important pilgrimages for millions of devotees. The Amarnath cave lying in the Kashmir Himalayas near the Amravati stream and at a height of 12,729 ft. is a place of most fascinating spiritual experiences as well as an awe-inspiring spectacle. It symbolises the spiritual importance of Kashmir since people from every corner of India from Kashmir to Kanyakumari throng the holy cave for their annual pilgrimage in the month of *Shravan* (August) every year. The cave is about 50 ft. long, 55 ft. wide and 45 ft. high in the middle. It is spacious enough to accommodate about a thousand pilgrims. There are very few natural caves in India which are as commodious and high as this one. At the dead end of the cave droplets of water permeate down the limestone roof, which is further congealed into ice. This natural formation of ice takes the shape of *lingam*, the symbol of Lord Shiva. It waxes and wanes in size with the moon and attains its full dimension on the full moon (*Shravan Purnima*), the main day of offering prayers and coinciding with the festival of *Rakshabandhan*. Apart from this ice-lingam there are two other ice formations believed to be the symbols of Shiva's consort, Parvati and their son Ganesha. Swami Pranavananda, the celebrated explorer of Himalayas while commenting upon the phenomenon of these ice formations

observed: "There are two holes in the northern wall of the cave from which water trickles out and freezes into ice as soon as it comes out. One of the holes is bigger, below which a huge snow *linga* is formed which is the famous snow image of Amarnath. On the left side of the *linga* is formed another ice formation called Ganesha and on its right Parvati; but by *Shravan Purnima* all these three melt away". However, the waxing and waning of the ice-lingam coinciding with the appearance of moon has remained a mystery.

Amarnath is one of those ancient institutions which have kept the fire of spirituality burning in the hearts of the people. One sees here "the very soul of India laid bare in all its innate beauty and sweetness of faith and devotion." Swami Vivekananda himself exclaimed after his pilgrimage to the cave, "I never had been to anything so beautiful, so inspiring". His experiences were further recalled by Sister Nivedita who wrote: "Never had Swami felt such a spiritual exaltation. So saturated had he become with the presence of the Great God that for days after he could speak of nothing else. Shiva was all in all; Shiva, the eternal one, the great monk, rapt in meditation, aloof from the world". The socio-cultural and religious significance of the Amarnath cave is so awe-inspiring that it is here where one feels face to face with God.

There are many legends woven around the existence of Amarnath cave. According to one such legend, Lord Shiva had narrated His theory of immortality to his divine spouse, Parvati in this cave. It is also believed that being in a happy mood at this particular spot, Lord Shiva is agreeable to grant boons to His devotees. There is historical evidence to suggest that the cave was the place of pilgrimage since ancient times. Oldest reference to the cave is found in Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* in its account of King Nara I (994-855 BC). According to Kalhana the cave was known to the Hindu kings of Kashmir valley even earlier than 1000 BC. Reference to this cave occurs twice in the chronicle first when king Ram Deva who ruled Kashmir around 1000 BC is said to have imprisoned and drowned the debauched king Sukh Deva in the Liddar (Lambodhari) river near the mountain ranges of Amarnath. The second reference is in connection with king Sandimati (34 BC-17 AD) who is stated to have visited the ice-lingam. During this time Amarnath was known as Ambreshwara, which later came to be known as Amburnath in the twelfth century AD, when Kalhana wrote his *Rajatarangini*. Zain-ul-Abidin, the famed ruler of medieval Kashmir is also described by some historians as having visited the cave.

Bhringish Samhita, an ancient Sanskrit text also describes the origin of the pilgrimage. According to this text, the people of Kashmir prayed to Rishi Bhringish to show them the path of salvation. Moved by their fervent prayers, the Rishi revealed to them the sanctity of Amarnath cave and its location. And thus began the annual pilgrimage. However, according to another legend, in ancient times there was a grocer named Soda Wony who lived in a village in Kashmir. He was a holy man and used to distribute sweets to children in his neighbourhood. One day these children told Soda Wony about a person who used

to come riding on a bull to play with them. Excited over this, Soda Wony wanted to see the person whenever he came and help him at least to get hold of bull's tail. And Soda Wony succeeded in getting hold of bull's tail with the help of children till he reached a place where the bull stopped and a voice appeared asking his wish. Soda Wony only expressed his desire to have a *darshan* of the invisible person. He was asked to come to Sheshnag on the eve of Shivratri when he received the 'darshan'. It is believed that the invisible person was none other than Lord Shiva who alongwith Parvati was waiting for Soda Wony near Sheshnag lake. Soda Wony boarded the boat which disappeared later. Soda Wony's experience spread far and wide in the valley. Since then every Kashmiri Hindu aspires to visit the holy cave to have *darshan* of ice-lingam before his/her death.

All these accounts show that this sacred cave was known to the people in early times. Since the route to this sacred cave lay over mountains and glaciers, it was probably forgotten till a Muslim shepherd in search of his flock found this cave with the ice-lingam inside. He further communicated the news to his brothers who in turn made it known to others. The shepherd and his descendants now called as the Maliks became guides to the cave and retain to this day a share in the offerings to the deity.

Pilgrims generally start in a procession under the auspices of the *Chhari Saheb* or *Chhari Mubarak* (the holy mace) and as per practice no pilgrim can go ahead of the *Chhari*. The practice of *Chhari* leading the procession to the holy cave has a legendary tale. It is believed that *Rakshasas* used to harass the prilgrims on their way to Amarnath. On this Takshaka Naga, the serpent king came to their rescue and bestowed upon them Shiva's staff, enjoining them to carry the sacred standard before them to ward off the harassing spirits. Thus started the practice of *Chhari* (Shiva's staff) leading the annual pilgrimage each year. The *Chhari* generally leaves Srinagar at Dashnami Akhara after a ceremonial puja on the fourth day of the bright fortnight of *Shravana*. Before departure, they visit Hari Parbat and Shankracharya temples and then proceed stage by stage for the cave. In ancient times, the Mahant carrying the *Chhari* used to start *yatra* from Pargasur, a village in Hoshangabad district of Madhya Pradesh. In those days, although the yatra was difficult, the devotees braved it out of their sheer faith and suffered the hazards as a mark of penance. Later on Guru Arjun Dev donated land to the Mahant at Amritsar, from where yatra to the cave started taking place.

Amarnath Mahatmya, an ancient text has identified the following sacred places where a pilgrim is expected to have bath or drink water before entering the holy cave:

Shurahyar – previously called **Shodashi Kshetra**, is about two and a half miles from Srinagar. In ancient times there was a stone stair-case leading from this place to Shankracharya hill. Later a temple was built here.

Shivpora – There used to be a temple here.

Pandrethan – Previously known as **Puranadhishthana**, this place is about one and a half miles from Shurahyar. There was a temple placed in the middle of a spring, believed to have been built by Meru, the Prime Minister of King Partha (921-931 AD). The ruins of this temple still exit here.

Pampore – Previously known as **Padmapur**, it once served as the favourite haunt of Rajanak Acharyas, the present Razdan family. It is about five and a half miles from Pandrethan, The famous mystic poetess of Kashmir, Lalleshwari belonged to this place, which is now known as Laltrag.

Javati-Modern **Zewan** is about seven miles from Srinagar. There is a spring dedicated to Vasak Nag.

Awantipur – Ruins of old temples built by king Awantivarman (855-883 AD) still exit here.

Barsu – A stream called Rudra Ganga flowed through this village.

Jaubror – There was a temple here in ancient times.

Belihar – Now known as **Belyar**. It was earlier known as Lakshmi Khetor.

Wagahama – This place is now known as **Hastikaran**.

Chakreshwar or Tsakrish – The modern **Tsakdar** is a plateau on the right bank of the river Jhelum near Bijbehara, about 28 miles from Srinagar.

Hari Chandar – It is on the southern side of the Bijbehara stone temple where a huge stone lingam exists.

Sthalwat or modern **Thajwor** – There is a Shiva temple.

Suryai Gohwat – Now called **Sriguphvara** is about five miles from Thajwor.

Lambodari – It is a stream in which the pilgrims used to take bath.

Sirham – There is a spring called Surya Ganga where pilgrims offered prayers.

Bodrus – It has importance due to its being sacred to Ganesha.

Bala Khelyan or the modern Bala Khellan is also known as Vishnu Kshetra.

Ganish (Ganesha) Bal situated on the right bank of the Lidder below Pahalgam has a Ganesh temple.

Mammaleshwar (Shiva Lingam) situated on the right bank of the Liddar is famous for its spring and an old temple having a Shiva Lingam.

Bhrigupati Kshetra – This is a spring in Pahalgam which is believed to have been associated with Bhrigu Rishi.

Nila Ganga is about three miles from Pahalgam.

Pissu Hill is stated to have been formed as a result of the destruction of the Rakshasas by the Devtas who defeated the former and did not allow them to go to Amarnath.

Shesh Nag lake

Wavjan

Panchtarni, Amravati.

On their return from the holy cave the pilgrims are required to revisit Mamleshwar and take bath in the nine springs of Naudal. Later they used to go to Patal Ganga near Nishat garden to take bath.

However, with the construction of a motor road from Srinagar to Pahalgam covering a distance of about 60 miles, the old yatra route has undergone changes. Most of the pilgrims now rush to Pahalgam without having a dip in any of the shrines mentioned in *Amarnath Mahatmya.* It is at Pahalgam that the pilgrims assemble before trekking to the holy cave. There is another hilly track which starts from Baltal in the Sindh valley.

Before the pilgrimage starts from Dashnami Akhara at Srinagar, the pilgrims visit Hari Parbat and Shankracharya temples. Later, they do halt at Durga Nag, Pampore and Bijbehara temples. At Bijbehara a *gosain mela* (the fair of hermits) used to be held, as all Sadhus accompanying the *Chhari* halted here, before proceeding onwards to Anantnag. The *Chhari* then proceeds to Bawan, where there is a famous spring. From Bawan they move to Aish Muqam which is famous for the shrine of saint Zaina Shah Sahib widely known as Janak Rishi among the Hindus of Kashmir. Now they march ahead towards Ganish Bal which is situated on the right bank of Liddar below Pahalgam. Here devotees worship at the ancient Ganesh temple.

Pahalgam is the base camp where all pilgrims assemble to begin their final yatra to the Amarnath cave. The yatra commences on the night of the eleventh lunar day or on the morning of the twelfth lunar day of *Shravan* (July/August). A lovely bridle path, zigzags, uphills and down dale through some of the finest woodlands leads to the holy cave. The pilgrims march in a deeply devotional spirit and reciting hymns. Swami Vivekanada described the Yatra in these words:

> "The process of several thousands of pilgrims in the far away cave of Amarnath, nestled in glacial gorge of the western Himalayas, through some of the most charming scenery in the world, is fascinating in the extreme. It strikes one with wonderment to observe the quiet and orderly way in which a canvas town springs up in some valley with incredible rapidity at each halting place with its bazaars and broad streets running through the middle and vanishing as quickly at the break of down, when the hole army of gay pilgrims are on their march once more for the day. Then again the glow of the countless cooking-fires, the ash covered Sadhus under the canopy of their large *geru* (orange) umbrellas pitched in the ground, sitting and discussing or meditating before their *dhunies* (fire), the Sanyasis of all orders in their various garbs, the men and women with children from all parts of the country in their characteristic costumes and their devout faces, the torches simmering at night fall, the blowing of conch-shells and horns, the singing of hymns and prayers in chorus-all these and many other romantic sights and experience of a pilgrimage, which can be met with nowhere outside India, are the

most impressive and convey to some extent and idea of the overmastering passion of the race for religion. Of the psychological aspect and significance of such pilgrimage, done on foot for days and days, much could be written. Suffice it to say that it is one of those ancient institutions which have above all, kept the fire of spirituality burning in the hearts of the people. One sees here the very soul of the Hindu nation laid bare in all its innate beauty and sweetness of faith and devotion."

The first lap of the Yatra ends at Chandanwari (19,500 ft.) which is 16 kms. from Pahalgam. Between Pahalgam and Chandanwari, there exists a jeepable road. Yatris take bath at the Nila Ganga on the way which traverses through dense forests and is flanked by mountains on all sides. The flow of the blue waters rushing through the rocks creates a breath-taking beauty of nature. Beyond Chandanwari, there is a steep ascent for about a mile and half known as Pissughati, which is at the height of 11,081 ft. Pissughati hill is full of flowers and herbs which grow wild on both sides of the track. About two miles from top of the Pissughati is Zojpal, a nice camping ground. After passing through Naga Koth, the yatris reach to Sheshnag (11,730ft.), the next major halt after Chandanwari. The total distance from Chandanwari to Sheshnag is 13 kms. Yatris usually take bath in the Sheshnag lake which remains glacial barring a few months of summer and monsoon.

Sheshnag lies in a depression surrounded on one side by about 16,000 ft. high mountains. On the flanks of these mountains there are two glaciers which provide water to feed the lake. The silvery streaks of water flowing through the rocky slopes move like Shesh snake until they disappear into the lake. The story of Sheshnag is found in *Rajatarangini*, according to which the serpent god named as 'Sushravas' (one possessed of good fame) lives in the lake. It seems that the lake has taken the present name of Sheshnag after the god who has been popular with pilgrims. "Sheshnag also symbolizes the cosmic ocean in which Lord Vishnu, the preserver of the universe moves reclining on a seven headed mythical serpent, Adishesha".

Next stage is Wavjan (12,230 ft.), 8 miles from Chandanwari and two and a half miles from Sheshnag. It is a barren plateau and is known for ferocious storms. Food cannot be cooked here due to drop in atmospheric pressure. On the 14th lunar day of *Shravan*, the yatris under the leadership of *Chhari Sahib* ascend to Ashad Dhaki and then walking through a short but very steep and slippery path reach Mahagunas pass at the height of 14,800 ft. Mahagunas Pass is a plateau where the herb of the same name once used to grow. From here, the yatris descend to Hokasar and Kalinar where the route from Pahalgam via Astanmarg which is four miles shorter. Two miles onward is Nagara Pal, a huge boulder, on which the yatris scramble with two pebbles in hand beating the rock as if beating the drum to declare their arrival. A further walk of one and half mile takes them to the bank of the Panchtarni stream which is third stage. Panchtarni is a confluence

of five mythical streams. The whole region is rich in herbs. The sunset on the snowy peaks is marvelous.

The holy cave is only seven kms, from Panchtarni. The yatris cross through the Sant Singh Ridge, the present route which is plain up to three kms and then four kms of very gradual ascent, part of it over a small glacier. A narrow defile goes up to the holy cave which is nestled among mountains between 16,000 ft. and 17,000 ft. above sea-level. On the day of *Shravan Purnamasi* (when the moon is full), devotees take a dip in the cold waters of Amravati, then annoint themselves with Amarbhooti (gypsum) and enter the cave chanting hymns to Lord Shiva. They chant hymns calling upon Shiva to give *darshan*. The ice-lingam is seen in a recumbent position on a natural pedestal (*pitha*). The Mahant of the *Chhari Sahib* sits close to the pedestal with two silver stoves placed on either side of the ice-lingam. The devotees offer to the deity camphor, ghee, raisins, candy sugar, black pepper, cloths, silver and gold ornaments. The chanting of recitations from the Vedas echo through the spacious cave and the two doves make their appearance. This sight is considered to be an affirmative answer to the devotees' prayers. The devotees shout *ishawar darshan paya re* (we have seen the manifestation of the Lord). After their prayers, the yatris take with them a part of the offering of raisins, gypsum powder from the cave as *vibhuti* to their homes. After having a feeling of being nearer to God in this spiritual atmosphere, the yatris take their steps back into the material word. Now the descent from the cave begins and devotees reach Pahalgam via Chandanwari.

The magnitude of the tragedy that befell Amarnath yatra in August 1996 brought to fore the need for a coordinated and long term strategy to ensure the safety of the pilgrims. It is not for the first time that such a tragedy had occurred. The worst ever mishap had taken place in 1928 when as many as 500 pilgrims and almost the same number of ponies died enroute the cave. In 1969, forty pilgrims died as a result of cloudburst in Pahalgam. And in the following year (1970) eighteen people and a number of ponies lost their lives due to bad weather at Sheshnag. The 1996 Amarnath tragedy evoked nation-wide concern and there was an uproar in the Parliament. The Home Minister who flew to Pahalgam and Panjtarni later made a detailed statement in the Parliament. The Prime Minister also made a statement in Lok Sabha on 26 August 1996 detailing the steps taken by the State administration in this regard. Though the demand for a judicial enquiry was not acceded, a one man inquiry Committee of Dr. Nitish K. Sen Gupta, former Revenue Secretary and Member Secretary, Planning Commission, was set up to probe the Amarnath yatra tragedy and suggest appropriate steps. Subsequently Shri Amarna:h Shrine Board (SASB) with the State Governor being its Chairman was constituted. The SASB has proved to be a good experience both in terms of management of Amarnath shrine, generating and consolidating the revenues and attracting/managing heavy rush of pilgrims, numbering several lakhs. Notwithstanding the crisis over the Amarnath yatra (in July-August 2008),

a record number of 529,000 pilgrims visited the Amarnath Cave in Kashmir during the two month period (18^{th} June-16 August 2008). This figure outnumbered the combined figure of pilgrims to the shrine in 2006 (265,000 persons) and in 2007 (214,000 persons).[1] That such a huge number of yatris turned up despite the turmoil in Jammu and Kashmir over the Amarnath land transfer row, demonstrates the abiding faith of the people from various parts of India in the holy cave of Lord Shiva.

Given the national importance of Amarnath as a place of spiritual solace for millions of Indians, its potential to promote pilgrim tourism in J&K State and the need to restore the sanctity and glory of indigenous heritage and traditions which would in turn defeat the obscurantist and extremist ideology of Pakistan-supported secessionists and mercenaries in Kashmir, at least the following steps are required to be taken in a coordinated manner:

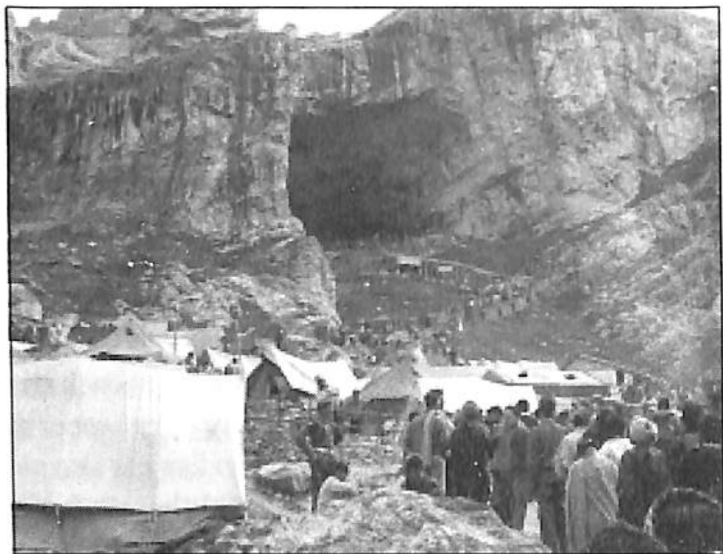
1. Retaining and strengthening the autonomous character of Shri Amarnath Shrine Board on the pattern of Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board. The SASB should take appropriate steps in building roads, pathways and installing pre-fabricated huts so as to facilitate smooth pilgrimage of the yatris over such a difficult terrain, whether by Pahalgam-Chandanwari or the Baltal route. The practice of community *Langars* feeding the pilgrims en route be continued, with due precautions being taken to maintain clean environment and ecological balance.
2. Important temples/shrines like Hari Parbat, Shankracharya, Pandrethan, Bijbehara, Anantnag, Mattan, Mammaleshwar, Ganesh Bal and also the Chhota Amarnath caves elsewhere in Bandipora and Poonch area be taken care of by this Board out of its funds. This will not only ensure proper maintenance of these ancient historic temples and centers of civilization but also promote pilgrim tourism in the valley thereby bringing real economic benefit to the people.
3. The meteorological, telecommunication and traffic control departments need to be put into action to provide advance weather forecasts and up-to-date information on the condition of roads etc. and to create adequate telecommunication contact along the yatra route.
4. Archeological Survey of India and departments of Culture and Tourism in the State and central governments should be roped in to help maintain the ancient historic and cultural sites such as Hari Parbat, Shankracharya, Bijbehara, Martand, Mattan etc. on the route to Amarnath.
5. A number of stone/wooden huts/structures be built at suitable points to enable the pilgrims to halt and take rest in the event of rain or snow.
6. The alternative route via Sonamarg and Baltal to Amarnath be developed with adequate facilities.
7. Keeping in view the increasing number of pilgrims, adequate roofed

accommodation for yatris needs to be created both at Jammu, Srinagar, Anantnag and Pahalgam by building rest houses, youth hostels etc. on the pattern of the Haj houses in Jammu and elsewhere.

These steps will go a long way in creating the infrastructural support necessary for reassertion of traditional Kashmiri composite cultural identity and humanistic philosophy. Besides, it will boost the contribution of pilgrim tourism to State's economy and help in a big way in the economic alleviation of the people in the Valley.

REFERENCE

1. See *The Hindu*, 21 August 2008.



1. Pilgrims Entering the Amarnath Cave



2. Amarnath Ice Lingam

CHAPTER 10

In Search of Roots

A.R. Nazki

Sultan Zainul Abideen popularly known as Budshah, the Great King ruled Kashmir between 1420-1470 AD. Budshah was a kind and benevolent king. His reign was marked by tolerance, amity, brotherhood on one side and overall intellectual, economic and industrial development on the other. He not only encouraged the local talent, be they poets, scholars or artisans and craftsmen; but also brought into Kashmir notables from far and wide. Thus a large number of men of letters, scholarship, art and craft made their abode in the beautiful and happy valley of Budshah. One among these accomplished men was Mir Syed Ali Bukhari, who was known for his scholarship and intellect. Bukhari's descendents continued to live in Kashmir and in due course of time excelled as jurists and the office of Chief Jurist came to stay in the family for a long time. Syed Bukhari's great grandson was Mir Hajji Mohammad Qazi. As fate would have it, he lost his children one after another in infancy till a boy 6th in line was born. Father, fearing for the life of this infant too, took him to Sheikh Hamza, popularly known as Makhdoom Sahib, whose shrine on south western aspect of Hari Parbat continues to draw thousands of devotees till this day. Sheikh Hamza was born in 1494 and he passed away in 1576 AD.

Hajji Mohammad Qazi told the *Sheikh* about his predicament and his desire to give away the little one to Sheikh Hamza as *Niyaz* (an offering) so that he could by the grace of Sheikh Hamza be spared from the jaws of death. On seeing the little infant presented to him by Hajji Qazi, the saint Sheikh Hamza at first smiled and then turned sad. The frightened father saw another tragedy in this sadness but Sheikh Hamza was quick to clarify. Look: this is the blessed one and I was happy to take him under my patronage

but then Peer Dastgeer himself intervened and said "he is my own". That is why I was a bit disappointed for not having him as my disciple. The child grew under the shade of Sheikh Hamza and later on came to be the founder of *Qadri* Order of Sufis in Kashmir. He was Mir Nazuk Niyazi Qadri, whose shrine is situated at Kadi Kadal in downtown Srinagar. Around the time that Mir Nazuk was growing in stature, an illustrious son of Kashmir came in contact with Sheikh Hamza. He was Datatreya Ganesh Kaul, a wise and respected Kashmiri Pandit. Sheikh's influence was decisive and Ganesh Kaul embraced Sheikh Hamza's creed and was to become the Muslim ancestor of the Fazili clan of Kashmir. Ganesh Kaul lived on the bank of Papchan stream at Gamroo, in Bandipora area of Kashmir and Fazilis although spread to many areas in later days continue to inhabit Gamroo and adjoining villages.

About a dozen generations down the line in the two illustrious disciples of Sheikh Hamza, were born Mir Ghulam Rasool Nazki, on Mir Nazuk Qadri's side and Aisha Banoo on Datatreya Ganesh Kaul's side. Whereas Mir Ghulam Rasool Nazki is well known and it would not be proper or necessary for me to introduce him, Aisha Banoo merits an introduction. She was married to Mir Ghulam Rasool Nazki at the age of 13 years and lived about 58 years of married life, till her death in 1980. She carried many traits of her ancestors and was happiest when feeding others. Her home at Beeruni Kathi Darwaza (Chandra Peetham) was a *sarai* where every one was welcome. She could not and did not compromise on one thing, education of her children. She was totally devoted to her husband and attached to her Maker. She was a truly remarkable and noble soul. She had given birth to nine children in all, one daughter and eight sons. One among the sons died in childhood. Seven survived. I am sixth. I spent most of my childhood around Hari Parbat hillock, as we lived in its foot hills. The first impressions of my childhood somehow are linked to the hill and I distinctly remember a story I read when I was very young. It was the story of Sharika or Sharada, written by one Iqbal Nath Kaul and published in some literary magazine in Urdu. The story was so fascinating that it got imprinted on my conscious mind and I have over the last decades again and again turned it in my mind. It was indeed a very simple story but equally complex in its reach. Once upon a time Kashmiris found to their utter disbelief that they had overnight lost their speech, the tongue; they could no longer talk, utter a word or communicate with one another. The entire population was grief stricken and did not share their thoughts amongst themselves and, therefore, could not find a way out of this silence that had engulfed them all of a sudden. They began to weep, but only in silence, for no words could come out of their lips. They could only shed tears, but not wail and cry. At last unable to bear the burden of their silence, they abandoned their hutments, their abodes and ran in one direction, crying and weeping, wailing but in silence. Their destination was the Hari Parbat hill. They sat at an open space and went in to a silent prayer, shedding tears instead

of words. They continued to prey in the silence of their souls, till at last their prayers were answered. A bird appeared in the skies above and hovered over the congregation. It flew on their heads as if to re-assure them, as if to protect them under its wings. Finally it descended in front of the congregation on to an open space and lo and behold! With its beak, it began inscribing the letters of the lost alphabet on the ground. As it inscribed the first letter, the congregation read it and read it aloud; they had recovered their tongue, their language, their voice. The bird that had descended from the heavens was Sharika the *mynah* and it had come as the saviour of people. It had turned out to be their teacher, philosopher and guide. Iqbal Nath's story struck roots in my whole being. I was to say the least fascinated by the story. I grew around this story and around Hari Parbat hill.

An incident in later years around my boyhood readily comes to my mind. It was about a dream, an apparition, and a vision that I had one night. I saw myself to be on the top of Hari Parbat hill and I saw a walled orchard on the top. There was a door, it was opened the moment I approached it. I went inside and saw a beautiful orchard full of almond trees but the branches on the trees did not bear the almond blossom, but instead carried diamonds, sapphires, emeralds, gems and all precious stones. The radiance from these branches was brilliance par excellence. I saw few twigs and barks dropped to the ground. I started collecting them. While doing so, a fairy appeared in front of me. She was the most beautiful being I could imagine. She spoke directly to me. "Why are you gathering these fallen twigs?" I had no answer. She repeated the question again and then continued. "Why are you gathering these fallen twigs, when the whole orchard belongs to you?"

My rendezvous with Hari Parbat continued in the years to come, till finally I had to leave Hari Parbat and the valley. But somehow, the legend of Hari Parbat did not abandon me and it was quite spontaneous that when time came to put a signboard on the gate of my new house at Sidra, Jammu, Hari Parbat came to my lips and is since inscribed on granite.

Sharada Peeth had to come with Hari Parbat. There was no escape from it. I heard it long back, that I shall one day re-trace my steps to Sharada Peeth, the steps of my ancestors, the ancestors of Datatreya Ganesh Koul, the ancestors of his *peer* Sheikh Hamza Makhdoom Sahib. I went to Muzaffarabad for the first time in the year 2000. The occasion was the marriage ceremony of a niece of my wife. My wife's sister had been married to a cousin at Muzaffarabad. During this visit, I expressed my desire to visit Sharada but was persuaded not to go on two counts, the road from Muzaffarabad to Sharada was under continuous shelling and therefore never safe; second I was not keeping a very good health. My second visit to Muzaffarabad was in response to devastation caused by the earthquake of 2005. Whereas thousands of people perished in this disaster, my own sister-in-law (my wife's sister) laid down her life while saving hundreds of her

school children, she being the Head Mistress. During this visit, there was no scope of moving out of Muzaffarabad, although the desire, the longing kept surfacing again and again I could not even talk about it given the conditions prevailing as that time in Muzaffarabad.

My third and last visit materialized in June 2007, again to attend the marriage of second daughter of the deceased sister-in-law. This time we had to be there by the side of the family. While at Muzaffarabad after completing the ceremonies associated with marriage, I expressed the wish to visit Sharada Peeth and as if by the hand of providence everything seemed to be falling in place and the journey from Muzaffarabad to Sharada was slated for 3rd of July 2007.

Muzaffarabad is a small city as compared to the city of Srinagar or Jammu. It is situated around the confluence of Jhelum and Kishen Ganga (now Neelam) rivers which flow in to Muzaffarabad from east and north directions respectively. The place is surrounded on all side by huge mountains and as one goes up in the mountains in any direction the surroundings are picturesque and the view of the rivers meandering their way into the spot where they meet is beautiful.

If one goes upstream along the river Jhelum, one can reach Uri and so the valley of Kashmir. The area around Jhelum before it meets Kishen Ganga has been known as Jhelum valley and continues to be known as such. Going upstream along the river Kishen Ganga also takes one to Kashmir valley but on way lies the small village of Sharada. For travel from Muzaffarabad to Sharada, one has to follow the only route available that is the road roughly going along the river Kishen Ganga for most of its course. The left bank of the river while one is going upstream is almost exclusively under Pakistan's occupation whereas the right bank of the river Kishen Ganga exchanges hands here and there between the two countries. As one leaves Muzaffarabad, the steep trek into mountains begins as the road starts gaining height almost immediately on departure from Muzaffarabad, the Kishen Ganga, which is a wide expansive river at Muzaffarabad, becomes thinner and thinner as one climbs up. The road as it gains height also becomes narrower and rough. I was told that it was in a better condition prior to the earthquake of 2005. The tremors destroyed most of this road as huge mountains suddenly crumbled down and brought heaps of stones and rubble on to the road. I saw the road maintenance work in progress almost everywhere on the road. I was told that the earthquake has destabilized the mountains and, therefore, any stretch of road has to be laid again and again. The Kishen Ganga river roars as its water plunges down on rocks from the heights above in its downward march to Muzaffarabad. It is a sight to be seen as the water turns milky white on account of the churning that goes on. As one gains height, the forest also appears to take a denser and richer look. One can see embankments on the road, and one is informed that these solid embankments were constructed to keep off the bullets that rained continuously on the

road from across the river before the two countries decided on a complete ceasefire. There are scarcely any populated hamlets or villages that could be seen from the road, barring few hamlets like Patika and then the model township of Teetwal on the Indian side. After Teetwal one reaches the district headquarters of recently carved out Neelam district. This town is called Athmuqam and has a fairly well maintained guest house, a market place, a degree college and other offices, which one can notice of while traveling through. I stopped here for an hour and had lunch at the guest house. This place is around sixty kilometers from Muzaffarabad but takes close to three hours on the road to reach here. One important feature that strikes the visitor to this area is the fashion in which houses are constructed. I was really surprised to see Buddhist pagoda type of roofs on almost all constructions, new and old alike. It appears that many cultural trends and traits are not wiped off easily even after centuries of change. As one leaves Athmuqam, and begins the travel on the road to Sharada, the surroundings begin to acquire a beauty which is striking. The dense forest, the beautiful Kishen Ganga with its beautiful crystal clear water provide the main features for this extremely pleasing and picturesque landscape. The river goes on increasing in beauty and grandeur. On way one can see the town of Karna on the Indian side and one can call from across the river from Pakistan side and be heard on the Indian side. One can count the chickens in the yard of a farmer on the Indian side from across the border. Anyhow, as Sharada appears, one can sense the change in the air. The Kishen Ganga is no longer the roaring river on rampage. Although in great speed it appears calm and quite. The river's expanse increases as one goes up stream and the forest is now really dense, air cool and slowly but surely one begins to sense energy in the whole surroundings. There is a luminescence that pervades the atmosphere; there is calm, a total calm, as if all elements of nature are in silent prayer or meditation. It is serenity, peace, and solitude that greet you as one enters the land of bliss. It is here that one feels a sense of total well being, total peace and total balance. Even after a day of travel on rugged dusty mountain road, the entire toiling and tiredness vanishes in the air. One feels re-invigorated, revitalized, almost re-born fresh.

It was almost evening when I touched the ground at Sharada village. I went to the only rest house available in the village. Sharada is now a Tehsil headquarters, the Tehsil is also known as Sharada Tehsil, a part of Neelam district. Sharada Tehsil has a population of about 30,000 people and the village has about 3000 souls. It is a small place; it has a market, a mosque, few government offices and a police station. It has only captive power supply, the diesel generator supplying power for 3 hours in the evening. I took a round of the locality; I went up the river to see the confluence of Kishen Ganga with a mighty stream known as Surgan. Here also one can not but experience an unusual spectacle. The mighty Surgan is tamed the moment it touches Kishen Ganga, losing all its violence and turbulence as it joins the river. Another stream, the Madhumati joins the Kishen

Ganga about 1 km down stream and it is there that Sharada Peeth is situated. I decided against visiting Sharada Peeth when night had begun to fall around the mountains and trees had taken a darker hue. I returned to the rest house, with the resolve to visit the Sharada Peeth in the morning.

When I retired to my room in the rest house after dinner, I did not know that the night ahead of me was not going to be an ordinary, routine affair, a night in the hills. I had anticipated that I shall go into a deep sleep the moment I hit the bed, owing to the long and arduous travel that I had undertaken during the day. As the diesel generator supplying power to the village went off at 10 PM, the attendant came in and lit a typical kerosene lamp and the mere sight of this appliance reminded me of my childhood in the village when there was no electricity. I did get into the bed, but I couldn't sleep. Sleep had somehow abandoned my senses. I was neither sleepy, nor drowsy, I wasn't tired either. I just didn't want to go into sleep. I wanted to remain awake. Somehow, some power within me was slowly deciding things for me, one thing was certain, it wasn't going to be an ordinary night. I felt and sensed that I was on the threshold of a great experience. I had put out the lantern. It was pitch dark. There was no light anywhere in the room, but I was seeing everything around me. I left my bed and came to the balcony adjoining the room. This small projection was preceded with windows on all sides. I sat in the middle of this place and watched through the windows. There was no moon, but one could see even in the absence of any demonstrable source of light. I was definitely intrigued by this phenomenon and unable to resist the temptation to investigate and explore, I decided to go out on to the lawn outside. My caretaker had warned me that I should not venture out during the night for fear of wild animals. He had taken pains to secure all doors that led to my room; but the warnings simply became meaningless in the new situation. I couldn't stay indoors and so I opened all the three doors that led me out on to the lawn; once on the lawn I straightaway headed towards the river. The lawn and the whole rest house complex was congruous with the river. I reached the bank and found a few wooden benches there. I sat on a bench fixing my gaze on the flowing water of Kishen Ganga. It was an unusual experience which defies narration or explanation. The water appeared to shimmer, to glisten and gleam in the otherwise dark night. The mountains in the distance appeared to reflect some luminescence, some strange light which can't be described in words or reproduced on canvas. By and by, I went into a state of consciousness where many events unfolded of their own accord. My own lack of expression forbids me from venturing in to the forbidden territory. Suffice it to say, that I felt as if I was in the exalted and blessed company of hundreds and thousands of our ancestors who had spent their lives in pursuit of knowledge, in developing the thought persona that we are proud of and shall continue to be proud of for many centuries to come. Night progressed in to early dawn and with the faintest of rays emanating between the cleft formed by two

mountains just behind the Kishen Ganga river, the flowing water started unfolding a dance in light and suddenly poet Iqbal's Persian verse which he sang in praise of sunset over Dal lake came to my mind, wherein he claimed to have seen Almighty God unveiled.

I set out for Sharada. It was a ten minute drive and then a walk of another ten minutes that brought me face to face with my heritage, with my past, with my roots. There at the foot of Sharada Peeth began the ascent by way of a stone stairway. At the base, someone had put up a sign board detailing Sharada history in his own way. I was told that the board was erected by some individual. The board has the information in Urdu which I translate as follows.

> Noted Muslim historian Al Beruni in his book *Kitab-ul-Hind* mentions Sharada in these words: "Sharada is situated in the south-west of Srinagar. Indians consider the place as extremely holy and on the eve of Baisakhi, people from all over India come to this place on pilgrimage, but due to snow and extremely difficult terrain, I could not visit the place myself."

During the reign of Kanishka I, Sharada was the largest academic institution in the entire region of Central Asia. Side by side with imparting education in Buddhist religion, history, geography, structural science, logic and philosophy subjects were taught to perfection. This University had evolved its own script which resembles Devnagari and was known as Sharada. In conformity with this the present village is also known as Sharada. This building was constructed by Kanishka I during 24 to 27 AD. The Sharada University building was constructed from north to south on a rectangular pedestal. Modern day engineers are overawed by the magnificent work of the structure. This building is different from all other ancient buildings in the subcontinent, in particular the centrally placed sanctum presents a unique style of architecture which is very interesting. It is (was) about hundred feet in height and has (had) carvings on its walls on all sides. There is a door way to its west. There is no trace left of a roof on the top of the structure. However, entry from the west is by means of sixty three steps. Even now some tribals adorn an elephant with a crown made of sixty three ornaments before worshipping it. The number 63 has a religious significance in Asian history. Few figures suggesting Buddhist faith are even now visible on the walls. These have been engraved into the stones. There used to be a pond in the building which does not exist now. People afflicted with skin diseases would bathe in the pond and get cured, because water came to the pond from a sulphur spring situated two kilometers away. Historical references suggest that five thousand individuals resided at Sharada. The entire area between Sharada and Kishan Ghati was populated. Kishen Ghati is the name of a hill situated three kilometers away from the main building at Sharada in the southeast direction, and is considered holy. There used to be a deep cave which had a huge statue inside and dead were cremated

under it and the ashes immersed in the Kishan Ganga (presently Neelam river). Majority of people are not aware of the real historical background of Sharada. The building presents the picture of ruin and is a victim of neglect, its academic and instructional importance appear to be only a dream.

There are in all 63 steps that take one to Sharada Peeth. The stairway is around 10 feet in width and each step is more than a foot in height and 2 to 3 feet deep. In all about 100 feet height is gained from the surrounding area. There was perhaps a gateway at the start of the stairway, for few massive stones can be seen at the bottom of the stair. Once on the top of the stairway, one can see the left half of an archway still standing whereas the right part of the archway has disappeared. The archway is also made up of chiseled stone and a few geometrical designs roughly forming the facade of a *Bhairav* temple can be seen outside the archway. From the archway, a peep inside the compound reveals the sanctum sanctatorium in the centre of the compound. Its entry is from the west that is facing the stairway. The temple is almost centrally placed and is surrounded by stone walls on all sides but the stones used for construction of the temple, the stairway and the archway are not the ones which are used for the outer walls. I was told by few people present there that the stone that has been used for the temple is not found in the area and was perhaps transported from some far away place. This was amazing keeping in view the size and weight of the transported stone slabs. The main temple continues to stand on its own strength. Its three walls are in good condition although door and the roof are missing. I could imagine that the door and roof must have been made of wood and therefore perished with age and neglect. I was happy to see that there were no signs of encroachments over the complex and the place was neat and clean.

The temple is roughly 24×24 feet and about 30 feet in height. The base or the plinth is about 4 feet above the ground. Inside nothing exists, floor is earth filled and no trace of stone slab (*Shila*) was visible. However, what remains under the soil is not known. I did find a patch in the left wall were the original stone slab appears to have been replaced by fragments of different stones. One piece of this filled stone also bears a very faint inscription which though visible could not be read. That these stone pieces could be the remnants of the *Shila*, is a distinct possibility and needs further study. An inscription on the left pillar at the entry of the temple is also visible. I mistook it for *Om* in the *Nagri* script. I was later on corrected by my revered sister Bimla Raina that this is Sharada and not the *Nagri Om*. It appears as is seen in the figure below.

On one side of the compound one can still find remnants of rooms or quarters, I was told that these were the living places of *Pujaris* in good olden days. There is a tree near the archway and it is also said to be very old. I couldn't identify the tree. The outer compound wall too has small temple like structures without any images or murtis in them. The temple or the adjoining walls do not carry any visible engravings or carvings. I could

see a lot of moss grown on the walls. I stayed for few hours at the complex and examined it in a detail. It was a very bright morning. I hadn't planned the visit in order to collect any information for public consumption; therefore I did not carry any regular photographic equipment. The visit was basically as a result of a call from within; but I had a mobile phone with camera. I took several snapshots here and there and once I returned to Jammu, I was amazed to see the quality of the pictures. I now realize that I was the first Kashmiri and Indian to travel to *Sharada* from this side of divide in 60 years. My dream, wherein I was told that the whole orchard is yours came true and I did go in to that orchard which has almond trees and each branch has for blossom, the diamond, emeralds, sapphires and gems, the precious stones of knowledge, wisdom, scholarship and the like.



1. The Signboard at the foot of Sharada Peeth situated in Pak-occupied Kashmir



2. Ruins of Sharada Peetha



3. Ruins of Sharada Peetha



4. "Om" in Sharada script

CHAPTER 11

Shankaracharya and Some Kashmiri Pandit Traditions

Rashnik Kher

The period between 8th and 12th century was a period of cultural renaissance in Kashmir. In a period spanning four hundred years Kashmir produced some of the greatest scholars who were instrumental in shaping Indian thought and philosophy. This period witnessed the resurgence of Agama and Tantra in Kashmir. The revelation of the Shiva Sutras could be termed as a milestone in the re-establishment of the Shaivite philosophy. In the words of K.C. Pandey, "Vasugupta gave a systematic form to the philosophical ideas of the monistic Tantras in his Shiva Sutras in the next decade after Shankaracharya's visit to Kashmir towards the end of the second decade of the 9th century AD." On the basis of this statement, one could infer that Shankaracharya did visit Kashmir but then there are scholars who claim otherwise. Shankaracharya's visit to Kashmir has always been a matter of debate and no conclusive evidence has ever been presented to prove or disprove it.

In this context one would like to go into various extant and oral sources to know whether Shankaracharya visited Kashmir at all and if he did, was he in any way influenced by the existing Tantric lore of Kashmir. It is also important to see how Shankaracharya's writings following his visit to Kashmir reflected the impact of Shaivagamic and Shakta aspects of Kashmiri philosophical systems. This paper seeks to look at various historical and empirical evidences which suggest that Shankaracharya did indeed visit Kashmir.

Sources on Shankaracharya's Life and Times

Before we begin to analyze various sources available to us for knowing Shankaracharya's life and times, we need to remind ourselves that a historical biography in the modern sense did not exist in ancient India. Exasperating as it may be, we will essentially be dealing with hagiographical accounts of Shankaracharya's life and philosophy. The extant legendary biographies of Shankaracharya date from the 14th to the 18th centuries, i.e., they are posterior to the Acharya by at least half a millennium to a millennium. Although these have certain broad similarities, these have numerous contradictions in detail, and are full of miracles and exaggerations.

The sources for the historical reconstruction of Shankaracharya's life and work can be broadly divided into three categories:

1. Traditional Biographic Literature
   (a) Extant Biographies.
   (b) Lost Biographies
   (c) Biographical accounts or references in Puranic or semi-Puranic Literature.
2. Monastic Traditions or Records
3. Miscellaneous Literary Sources.

All the above sources tell us a lot about the times in which Shankaracharya lived but a biography in the ordinary sense eludes us. In what may be termed as philosophical despair, Prof. Belvalkar concludes that "It is the works of Shankara which constitute his best biography." Notwithstanding the hagiographical or fictional nature of the above works, especially the biographical and Puranic literature, we have no option but to delve deep into them to churn out history out of hagiography.

The Date and Times of Shankaracharya

The controversy surrounding the date of Shankaracharya has led to the appearance of more than forty articles and books on the subject. What is worth noting is that the traditional date or dates upheld by most of the Shankara monastries even today widely diverge from the critical scholarly opinions which are also not unanimous. While the traditional view maintains that Shankaracharya lived somewhere between 5th to 2nd century BC, most modern historians and Orientalists are of the opinion that the Acharya lived in 8th or 9th century AD, with most of them seeming to agree that he lived from 788 to 820 AD.

Shankaracharya belonged to a period that followed the death of the great Harshavardhana of Kannauj in North India and Pulakeshin II in the South. The fall of

Guptas and the Vakatakas led to the collapse of great and stable empires in the country. Consequently this age witnessed a struggle for power that eventually led to the emergence of small feudal states, which in turn resulted in political anarchy and paved the way for disorder in traditional social systems. This can be easily testified by Shankaracharya's following comment on the *Brahmasutram*: *idanim iva kalantare pyavyavasthitaprayan varnashramadharman pratijanita* (One might suppose that *varnashramadharma* was in disorder earlier also, just as it is now.)

Philosophically, it was, however, a golden era, characterized by the proliferation of different schools of thought. Almost all schools of philosophy were closely linked with one religious sect or another. There was, however, a dichotomy in the way the schools accepted the authority of the Vedas. While the *Mimamsaka* and *Nyaya-Vaisesika* Schools accepted the authority of Vedas, the Buddhists and Jainas simply rejected them. It needs no mention that cultural changes in India before the advent of Islam were gradual and never radical or violent. Heterodoxy also seemed to prosper in this era. The popularity of the Kapalikas, Pasupatas, Tantarikas, Kalamukhas, Kaulas, Ajivikas and Pañcratras was also on the upswing. The relaxation of rigid social rules in the Tantric, Yogic and other ascetic communities were probably a source of their popularity. The writings of Bana, Bhavabhuti and the Brihatakatha-sloka-samgraha are an eloquent testimony to these tendencies. In my opinion, Shankaracharya lived in the transitional phase between the classical and post-classical era. This era represented a meeting point between the orthodoxy and heterodoxy, Brahmanical and Sramanic, *karma* and *jñana*.

Shankaracharya's Philosophy

When one starts reading about Shankaracharya's philosophy, it seems to be all Maya. On the one hand, Shankaracharya did not loathe polytheism while on the other he did not approve of the ways of Buddhists and Jainas or the followers of Sankhya for that matter. I almost seemed to have reached a dead end until I read an article titled *The System of Shankara* by Will Durant. Basing his approach on Badarayana's *Brahmasutras*, Shankaracharya composed commentaries on Vedanta. Shankara laid emphasis not on logic but on insight. In Shankaracharya's own words, "It is not logic that we need; it is insight, the faculty (akin to art) of grasping at once the essential out of the irrelevant, the eternal out of the temporal, the whole out of the part". Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason* asks, "How is knowledge possible? Whatever we know or learn is never free form the boundaries of time, space and causation. Thus what we seem to know is not real but our perception of the real." The world exists, but it is Maya not in the sense of delusion, but as phenomenon, an appearance created partly by our own thought. Behind the veil of Maya or the principle of change, to be reached not by knowledge and intellect

but only by insight and intuition, is the one universal reality, Brahman. Only when we forget the limits of time, cause and space does our Atman become identical with Brahman or God. Brahman is the cause and effect, the timeless and secret essence of the world. The aim of the philosophy is to find that secret.

The moot question is whether Shankaracharya visited Kashmir or not. There is a strong oral tradition among Pandits of Kashmir that Shankaracharya did indeed visit Kashmir. Call it folklore/belief/myth or whatever, I will record what I have heard as a part of my bedtime story:

> There is a place called Vichar Nag in Kashmir which Shankaracharya is believed to have visited. As the name would suggest, it was a place for congregation of thinkers for contemplation and exchange of thoughts. Shankaracharya in the course of a discussion suggests that the idol is but a representation of God and nothing more, while the Kashmiri scholars stick to their point of view that the idol of the deity is a manifestation of the deity. In the process of proving his point he slaps the idol of Shakti to show that it is bereft of any life but to his utter surprise blood starts oozing out of the forehead of the deity. It is then that Shankarachrya tears out a piece of cloth and ties it on to the forehead of the Shakti. It is believed that the practice of wearing a *taranga* (a headgear that Pandit women wear) has started from this day.

Another belief that survives till this day is that Shankaracharya along with his disciples was camping on the outskirts of the Srinagar city. It is believed that their hosts provided them with everything required for cooking food. What they, however, forgot to give them was something to light a fire. When the lady of the house wakes up next morning she is surprised to see that uncooked food and unused firewood is lying there just as it was given to Shankaracharya. On enquiring from them as to why they did not cook the food, she is told that they had nothing to light the fire with. "So that is what kept you hungry, learned ones," she exclaims. She sprinkles a few drops of water on the wood and it catches fire. The version describing the encounter between the sage and the lady of the house seems to be more plausible, considering the various hymns that Shankaracharya has written to the glory of the Mother Goddess. While describing the iconography of the Mother Goddess, Shankara uses the word *tatanka* for an ear ornament worn by her. This lends credence to the view that Shakti in Shankaracharya's hymns was not a virgin but a *sumangali* (a woman whose husband is alive).

That takes us to a different set of observations, mostly empirical but nonetheless important. Wearing of *tatanka* or ear-rings is common to most feminine deities. In some images of Ardhanarisvara, Shiva can be seen wearing a *tatanka* on the nari-half, thereby signifying the importance of the ornament. Some understand *tatanka* to be the same as *mangalasutra* which *sumangali* women, that is Hindu women whose husbands are alive,

wear. It is believed that this ornament is an outward symbol of the married status of a woman who must not forsake it in any case as doing so would amount to assuming that her husband is not alive.

Wearing of ornaments like the *mangalasutra* by *sumangalis* as an outward symbol of their marriage is a pan-Indian phenomenon. Wearing of the *tatankas* as an outward symbol of marital status survives till date, in its true form, only among the Pandit women of Kashmir. One can conclusively say, therefore, that wearing of *tatanka* or *dejihor* as these ear-ornaments are called in Kashmiri, was in vogue even in the times of Shankaracharya. This can be easily testified by the way Shankaracharya describes Goddess Sharada in his *Sarada bhujangaprayatastaka* (shloka 8).

bhavambhojanetrajasam-pujayamanam /
lasanmandahasa prabhavaktrachiham //

chalachchañcalacharu tatanka-karnam /
bhaje Sharadambamajashram madambam//

[I always pray to Sharadamba, my Mother, who is being worshipped by Lord Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma. She bears the mark of gentle beautiful smile on her face, her eyes beautified by the swinging of charming ear ornaments.]

Every time I read this shloka, the image of a married Kashmiri Pandit woman flashes in front of my eyes. The catch here is in the words 'the swinging ear rings'. The ear rings worn by Kashmiri Pandit women are longer and hence tend to swing more unlike ear rings worn by Hindu women (which are far shorter) outside Kashmir.

We will now read this very important verse from the *Saundarya Lahari* which many believe was composed by Shankaracharya in Kashmir (refer v. 28):

Sudhamapasvadya pratibhaya-jara-mriytu-harinam /
Vipadyante vishve Vidhi-Shatamakhadya divisadah //

Karalam yat kshvelam kabalitavatah kala-kalana na Shambohos /
tan-mulam tava janani tatanka-mahima //

[O Mother! All the denizens of the celestial regions, such as Vidhi, Satamakha and others, perish even after drinking nectar, which is known to confer immunity from the terrible old age and death. If the period of life of Shambhu, who has swallowed virulent poison, is beyond computation, it is all due to the peculiar virtue of Thy tatankas (ear-ornaments).]

Was Shankaracharya so enamoured by the beauty of the *tatanka* and so mesmerized by its philosophy and power that he established the concept outside Kashmir; or is it he who brought this ornament to Kashmir, are questions to be pondered over. Is it a mere coincidence that the deity in *Lalita Sahasranama* (composed by Shankaracharya) also wears *tatanka* much like the Mother Goddess of *Bhavani Sahasranama* (which is Kashmiri equivalent of the *Lalita Sahasranama*)? Could he have been inspired by *Bhavani Sahasranama* to write *Lalita Sahasranama*? Could it be that Shankaracharya adorned non-Kashmiri Goddesses with a Kashmiri ear-ornament? Incidentally, during *Varahalakshmi vratam* and other rituals, like *sumangali prarthana* (in Andhra Pradesh), the *sumangalis* are presented with an 'ear-leaf' even today. It is another question that they don't know what to do to it.

Sharada: The Connecting Link

I always harboured a desire to travel to Shringeri Sharada Peetha. In a way I was searching for my roots in a place as far as a remote corner of Karnataka. The travel through the scenic wild life sanctuary of Tungbhadra took me to the picturesque location where the temple of Sharada is located. My first observation upon reaching the temple was that the location of the temple bore striking similarity to the original abode of Sharada at Shardi in Kashmir. Both stood at the confluence of two rivers and both are located almost on a mound or a hill. I bowed to the goddess, Sharadamba as she is called there. Soon I started looking for the original sandalwood idol which Shankaracharya is believed to have brought from Kashmir and installed at Shringeri. I asked priests and guides about the idol and the Shrichakra, the Shrichakra that Shankarachrya is believed (according to the Shringeri Math records) to have carved before installing the idol of Sharada on it. One more similarity came to my mind – even at the temple of Sharada at Sharadi the goddess was installed on top of a Shrichakra. What came as a surprise to me was the close resemblance of the ear-rings (*tatanka*) of the sandalwood idol with that of a *dejihor*.

Madhava's *Shankara Digvijaya* tells us that it was Mandana's wife Ubhaya Bharati whom Shankaracharya requests to manifest in temples at Rishyashringa (Shringeri) after he accepts her as an incarnation of Saraswati. The *Shankara-vijaya-vilasa* of Chidvilasamuni states that Shankara met Mandana in Kashmir. G.C. Pande writes: "It may, however, be recalled that according to one tradition Sureshvara was originally Mandana Mishra who hailed from Kashmir." The *Guruvamsha Kavya* of Kashi Lakshmana Shastri totally omits the debate between Shankarachraya and Ubhaya Bharati. In fact, it goes on to say that this debate took place between Sharada and Shankaracharya. The Goddess Sharda is pleased with Shanakaracharya and accepts his request to accompany him to the banks of Tungbhadara.

This observation by G.C. Pande is worth noting in the context of the debate that Shankaracharya is believed to have entered with Sharada or Bharati. "Perhaps Kashmir would be the most likely place since it would reconcile the confusion of debating in front of Sharada in Kashmir with that of debating with the wife of Mandana identified with Bharati." Needless to say, whether it was Goddess Sharada or Ubhaya Bharati, there is no doubt that it is a Kashmiri feminine figure that adorns the seat at the temple of Sharada Peeth at Shringeri.

Shankaracharya's ascension to the *Sarvajñapitha* (Throne of Omniscience) at the temple of Sharada has been a matter of some debate. There are differing views among scholars, some of which claim that Shankaracharya ascended the *Sarvajñapitha* at Kanchi and not Kashmir.

Madhava's *Shankara Digvijaya* tells us very clearly that Shankaracharya ascended the Throne of Omniscience at the temple of Sharada at Kashmir. He details how Shankaracharya defeats various scholars of different schools. *Jagadguru-ratnamala-stava*, of Parama Shivendram, mentions Shankarachrya's *Sarvajina-pitharohana* at Kanchi. Govindanatha's *Shankaracharya Charita* mentions the accession of Shankaracharya to the *Saravjñapitha*. The *Shankara-vijaya-vilasa* of Chidavilasamuni states that Shankaracharya ascended the *Saravjñapitha* at Kanchi. The *Guruvamsha Kavya* of Kashi Lakshmana Shastri in its third canto says that Shankaracharya ascended the *Saravjñapitha* at Kashmir. Nilakantha's *Shankarabhyudaya*, in its sixth canto, talks of Shankara's visit to the *Saravjñapitha* in Kashmir.

So, the biographers are clearly divided over the question of Shankaracharya visiting Kashmir or ascending the *Saravjñapitha* in Kashmir. Based on my understanding of the texts mentioned above, it seems biographers who believe that Shankara established the Kanchi Mutt are the ones who claim that though Shankaracharya did ascend the *Saravjñapitha*, but it was at Kanchi and not Kashmir where this honour was bestowed on him.

Shankaracharya and Kashmir: A Philosophical Osmosis

By the 8th century, Buddhism was already waning in Kashmir. The local faith which had hitherto been greatly influenced by Buddhist thought and philosophy was fast returning to its Tantric, Shaivite and Agamic roots. Such was the time when Shankaracharya is believed to have set his foot on the sacred land of Sharada

In order to demystify the legend about Shankaracharya's reanimating the corpse of the dead king, G.C. Pande observes: "Presumably the legend arose from a misunderstanding. *Kama-kala* did not merely mean erotics, but had a technical significance in *Tantra-shastra* for which Kashmir was famous. This sense may be seen in *Kama-kala-vilasa*.

Shankara could have acquired a knowledge of the strongly advaiatic *Tantra-shastras* in Kashmir, which would fit in with the tradition that ascribes the *Saundaraya-Lahari* and the *Prapañchasara* to him as also the fact of the currency of Shrividya among his followers. A commentary of the *Prapañchasara* records that the work was compiled by Shankara in Kashmir."

Prapañchasara is in a way an endorsement of Tantricism. The *Vivarna* written by the Padampada records that it is a summary of the *Prapañchagama*, which was a bigger and older compendium of Tantra existing in Kashmir. The author of the sub-commentary *Prayoga Kamadipika* states that the work was compiled by Shankaracharya while residing in Kashmir. He explains this by the fact that Shankaracharya pays obeisance to Goddess Sharada at the very beginning of the work.

In most of his commentaries Shankaracharya makes no mention of Shiva and wherever he does it is mainly to criticize the dualistic theism of prevailing Shaiva system in South India. However, a marked shift in his stand can be observed in the *Dakshinamurti Stotra* which finds close echoes in non-dual Shaiva philosophy of Kashmir. It cannot be denied that the remarkable development of Kashmir Shaivism dates from the time Shankaracharya is believed to have visited Kashmir. K.C. Pandey observes: "If we compare the philosophical ideas of Shankara, as contained in his *Dakshinamurti Stotra* and explained by his pupil Surveshvaracharya in his commentary on the above *Stotra*, we find that Shankara's conception of the ultimate reality is the same as that of the *Pratyabhijña*. In fact he uses all the important technical expressions in the same sense in which they are used in the *Pratyabhijña*."

In the course of his travel to Kashmir and the Himalayas it is most likely that he came in contact with varieties of theistic monism which were prevalent there. While the basic philosophy of Shankaracharya might have stayed the same, it is very much possible that his acquaintance with diverse modes of worship may have led to his acceptance of other theistic beliefs. This is reflected in the *stotras* devoted to Devi in *Saundaraya Lahari*. For once his devotional fervour overcomes his epistemological caution as he sings to the majesty and glory of the Mother Goddess. It clearly emanates as a text wherein the "freedom or dynamism" of the consciousness (as in *Shakta Advaita*) overtakes the "passive and actionless" attribute of consciousness (as in Shankara's Advaita).The verse *Chatuhastya tantraih saklam abhisandhaya bhuvanam* from *Saundaraya Lahari* clearly establishes his inclination towards the Tantric system prevailing in Kashmir. The epithet *sarvatantra-svatantara* occurring in his *Virudavali* indicates that the Tantras of which he accepts the authority were sixty-four in number. The Tantraraja, which is a later Tantra in the Kaula system of Kashmir Shaivism according to some authorities, is recognized by Shankaracharya as the 65th Tantra in his *Saundarya Lahari*:

Catuh-shashtya tantraih saklam atisandhaya bhuvanam
Sthitas tat-tat-siddhi-pravasa-para-tantraih pashupatih;
Punas tvan-nirbandhad akhila purusarth'aika ghatana
Svatantram te tantram kshiti-talam avatitarad idam.

[Pashupati (Shiva) at first remained satisfied after 'deluding' (*atisandhaya*) the world by giving out the sixty-four Tantras, which expound practices conferring only one or another of the various psychic powers and the worldly fulfillments. Afterwards, on Thy special insistence, He revealed this Thy own Tantra to the world, independent of all the others and capable of conferring all the purusharthas – dharma, artha, kama and mokhsa – on the votaries by itself.]

The unanimity with which both the traditions (Kanchi and Shringeri) admit to the fact that Shankaracharya set up the Shricakra Yantra for worship lends credence to the fact that Shankara had clearly imbibed the Shakta Advaita while keeping his own intact. Shankaracharya's visit to Kashmir is corroborated by local legends as well as most of the biographies written of this great master. Although Kalhana makes no mention of his visit to Kashmir, but then considering the nature of *Rajatarangini* as a chronicle it shouldn't surprise us. Kalhana makes no mention of Abhinavagupta either, so one can reconcile with Shankaracharya not finding a mention in the *Rajatarangini*. Besides, we have to bear in mind the fact that Shankaracharya's visit did not invite any royal attention and thus could have gone un-noticed by chroniclers of kings.

It is necessary to make the mandatory reference to the temple of Shankaracharya in the centre of Srinagar city. This to my mind is a living example of the impact of Shankara on Kashmir. The reference to the temple is by Kalhana in the verse 341 of 1st Taranga of *Rajatarangini* wherein he mentions that Gopaditya (369-309 BC) consecrated the shrine of Jyestheshvara on the Gopa hill (Gopadari). The hillock, according to *Tarikh-i-Hassan* and *Waqiati Kashmir* of Mulla Ahmed was known originally as Anjana and later as Jeth Ludrak (Jyeshtha Rudra) and the temple was built by King Sandhiman of the Gonanda dynasty of Kashmir (471-536 Laukik Era), corresponding to 2605-2540 BC. He gave the name Jyeshtheshwara to the temple and the hillock came to be known as Sandhiman Parvat after the name of the king. This name Jyeshtheshwara for the temple prevailed till the arrival of Adi Shankaracharya, who is believed to have visited Kashmir and stayed at the temple complex.

CHAPTER 12

Beginnings of Bhakti in Kashmir

S.S. Toshkhani

Bhakti as a movement originated in South India where it formed its basic conceptions and beliefs, absorbing and assimilating elements from various traditions and theological systems and transforming these into an entirely new vision of the relationship between God and man. From there it swept across the whole of India from one corner to another with its emphasis on inwardness of experience instead of external ceremony, on undivided love for God instead of ritual orthodoxy, on worship as a personal relationship instead of dogma. In his book *Hymns for Drowning*, A.K. Ramanujan has described Bhakti as a "great many-sided shift in Hindu culture and sensibility." This "shift" found its earliest expression in the poetry of the Alvars – Tamil saint-poets who lived between the sixth and ninth century and were devoted to Vishnu, the *vachanas* of medieval Kannada Virshaiva poets forming the next expression of Bhakti in an Indian language. These early Bhakti poems expressing feeling of personal devotion to god have been described as "lyrical expression of love", intensely personal and impassioned and, therefore, having a direct and powerful emotional appeal. Soon other languages and regions followed. To quote A.K. Ramanujan again, "Like a lit fuse, the passion of Bhakti poems ... spread from region to region, from century to century, quickening the religious impulse".

Like Kabir of the Hindi belt, and Chaitanya of Bengal, Kashmir too was submerged by the Bhakti wave. The first heartbeats of Bhakti in Kashmir poetry can be heard in the *vaakhs* or verse sayings of Lalleshwari, the celebrated saint-poetess who lived in the 14th century. She had before her the precedent of Bhatta Narayana (9th century) and Utpaldeva (end of ninth and first half of tenth century), both outstanding poets and important

representatives of devotional Shaivism. Both of them advocated the path of love as the highest path to reach Shiva. There is one distinction, however, that has to be kept in mind before one talks about the models their "love poems" addressed to Shiva provided for Lalleshwari: they wrote exclusively in classical Sanskrit whereas Lalleshwari or Lal Ded chose colloquial Kashmiri – and this difference is extremely significant. Another point that has to be noted is that the works of these three major poets of devotional triadism represent only the first phase of Bhakti upsurge in Kashmir and that like the *Vachana* poetry of Kannada Virshaiva poets, this phase is exclusively devoted to Shiva. In fact it is Shaivism that binds Kashmir and South India together in one great spiritual bond.

This is not to suggest that no other bonds exist. Devotion to Vishnu also formed an equally significant Bhakti experience for Kashmir in that early medieval period. An important but relatively unknown fact is that one of the earliest Bhakti saints who lived in the Tamil speaking regions was from Kashmir. We do not know whether this particular saint-poet maintained any links with the land of his origin or not, but it is said of Bhakti saints that they were great integrators. They travelled from one place to another and across the regions, to claim adherents and find kindred spirits. The possibility of this saint having visited Kashmir, the land of his origin, can not be ruled out. This will be an interesting point to explore. If he did, he surely must have influenced the minds of people there and introduced them to some of the ideas expressed by him in his poems. While this is something on which light has still to be shed, there exists a significant corpus of Sanskrit works written in Kashmir describing the exploits of Vishnu in his various incarnations and expressing devotion to him. The *Ramayana Manjari*, *Mahabharata Manjari* and *Dashavatara Varnana* of Kshemendra, who lived in 11th century Kashmir, are some examples of such works. One may point out that it was only towards the 18th and 19th century that poetry devoted to Vishnu formed a distinct and significant trend in Kashmiri. This can be regarded as the second phase of the Bhakti movement in Kashmir and there were definite political and cultural reasons for its emergence which have hardly been studied. The fact is that Kashmiri Bhakti poetry has so far remained at the periphery of critical attention for reasons other than academic. We shall discuss both the phases of Bhakti movement in Kashmiri separately. These can be broadly distinguished as *nirguna* and *saguna* forms of Bhakti, or devotion to a God without attributes and to a God with attributes. This distinction is important to note for the study of the these two traditions.

In Kashmir, the early monistic Shaiva poet's God was *nirguna*, attributeless, without form and impersonal. Although He may bear the name Shiva, He is not the Shiva of mythology, as the triadic or Trika philosophy, as Kashmir Shaiva system is generally known. He "does not adhere to a personal God, that is to a God whose subsistent individuality is emphasized over and above His conscious or intelligential nature". The name Shiva or Parama Shiva (Supreme Shiva) that he gave to Him connotes a non-

personal entity – the Ultimate Reality. Yet He is the supreme consciousness whose manifestations are "separated from the self as external objects are reflected from a mirror". As it is difficult to relate personally and passionately to an impersonal or non-personal God, the poet realizing that He and the entire manifested universe is Shiva, envisages a personal aspect of Him linked to His manifestations. This is the case with all the three major representatives of devotional Shaivism – Bhatta Narayana, Utpaldeva and Lal Ded. All of them display a sense of harmony between rigorous metaphysical thought and deep emotional experience, self-awareness and mystical fervour, Gnosticism and love. For them Bhakti or devotion means immense love and adoration for God, not as a means to any end but as the highest end itself. We do not, however, find the term Bhakti as such being used by Vasugupta, the founder of the Self-Awareness school of Kashmir Shaivism. During his period devotionalism was not systematized in Kashmir. The era of devotion followed the era of Gnosticism in Shaiva philosophy of which the greatest representative was Abhinavagupta. It was Bhatta Narayana, Vasugupta's direct disciple and successor, who was the first poet of devotional Shaivism in Kashmir. He wrote the *Stava Chintamani*, or the 'Wishing Jewel of Praise', "a love poem of 120 verses", whose main theme is the union of Shiva and Shakti under the form of Light and Self-Awareness – *Prakasha* and *Vimarsha*. Bhatta Narayana worships Shiva as the compassionate God, the dispenser of universal grace and his only refuge whom he clenches and holds in his fist. Playing the role of the true devotee, Bhatta Nrayana "thirsts for the nectar of undifferentiation". "Whatever bliss is to be found in all of the three worlds", he says, "is only a drop from the ocean of bliss that is the God (Shiva) to whom I bow down".

Bhatta Narayana is followed by Utpaladeva (9th century) whose *Shivastotravali* (The Series of Hymns to Shiva) is said to be "the most beautiful of Shaiva love songs". He expresses himself in an impassioned form of devotional verse written in a personal and touching style. For him, he asserts, there is no greater suffering than the experience of separation from Shiva: "Pain is separation from You, and joy is union with You". This separation has produced "wounds of the heart", which are unbearable to him. This is an inexpressable torment which only the mystics know "who are used to ecstasy" and whose "hearts overflow with love". Describing the feeling, Utpala says: "Even if I am separated from you for only a moment, O Lord, soon, I consume myself with torments. Remain, therefore, always visible".

Coming to Lalleshwari or Lal Ded, or Lalla as she is simply called. We can say that she combines both the speculative and mystic tendencies in her verses called *vaakhs*. The roots of her mysticism lay in the tradition of triadic devotionalism exemplified in the works of Bhatta Narayana and Utpaldeva. She is without doubt the most popular among the Shaiva devotional poets and has influenced Kashmiri psyche more deeply than anyone else.

It was after a gap of nearly 500 years after Bhatta Narayana and Utpaldeva that Lal Ded appeared on the scene as the greatest Shaiva poetess of Kashmir. It is difficult to believe that Shaiva philosophy which held such great sway over people's minds in Kashmir would not have inspired any poetic work worth mentioning during this long interval of time. But all that we have in the name of Kashmiri literature in this early era of its development are just two works – the *Chhumma Sampradaya* verses which can be dated to the 11th century, and the *Mahanaya Prakasha* which can be assigned to the 13th century. Both these works concern esoteric practices and doctrines of Shaiva and Tantric sects. There is nothing in them that can be regarded as poetry despite their having been composed in verse. Nor do we find in them anything remotely devotional. Yet it would not be far-fetched to assume that the Shaiva devotional current in Kashmiri poetry kept flowing as a sub-terranian stream up to Lal Ded's time.

Lal Ded's *vaakhs* show that the mystic strain in her poetry combines her quest for Gnostic illumination with the depth of her emotional experience. Paul E. Murhy calls her the chief exponent of devotional or emotion-oriented triadism, and rightly so. In her verses we see her setting out in the quest of Shiva and yearning intensely for union with Him. They show her frustration at losing the direction and at the same time the strengthening of her determination to find Him and even possess Him. Like Utpala, she talks of the intensity of her anguish and writhes with the pain of separation. She realizes that a total surrender of her ego alone shall lead her to her cherished goal. She describes the ecstasy of this final union in images and metaphors which are stunningly beautiful:

I, Lalla, set out with burning longing
And seeking, searching, passed the day and night
Till lo, I saw to mine own house belonging
The Pandit, and seized my luck and star of light

(Tr: Nila Cram Cook)

I came by the highway
But by the highway I did not return
And I found myself stranded halfway on the embankment
With the light of the day gone
Searching my pockets a penny I did not find
What shall I pay now to the ferryman as fare?

Through the gate of the garden of my mind
I, Lalla, entered, and lo what joy!
I saw Shiva united with Shakti there
And became immersed in the lake of nectar
Now, what can death do unto me?

Recording her own mystical life in her verses, Lal Ded shares with Utpala and Bhatta Narayana a sharp feeling of the immediate presence of Shiva, the Divine Being. The poetry of all the three stems from an intense resignation to the divine will, and reflects their vivacity, originality and deep sincerity. There is a striking similarity in many of their passages which can be compared for their emotions, intoxications and sufferings and the metaphors and images expressed therein. For instance, Utpala in his mystic ardour and with a mind inflamed by powerful longing approaches Shiva, to attain communion with him and clenching Him with an impassioned cry holds him in his fist:

Here you are, I hold You in my fist! Here you are, like seen you.
Where are you fleeing?

(*Stavachintamani*)

This has a perfect parallel in Lalleshwari. She evokes almost the same image in this expression of hers:

I diffused outside the light that lit up within me.
And in that darkness I seized him and held Him tight!

Images and metaphors relating to the concept of Shiva's self-luminosity abound in Shaiva devotional poets, and the "darkness" that Lal Ded refers to is the dark Mystical Night of anguish and suffering which ultimately lead to the "Night of Undifferentiateness".

The first step in this "mystical progression is", according to Lilian Silburn, "Self-annihilation or destruction of all doubt and dualism, and the culmination is communion with the divine which, in Shaiva terminology, is self-realisation of one's Shiva nature, a stage in which nothing remains but Shiva-consciousness – *soruy su tab oh no kenh* (The Lord is everything and I am nothing!)

The ultimate mystical self-realization in Lal Ded, therefore, means absorption in Shiva:

In seeking 'me' and 'Thee' I passed the day
Absorbed within Thyself though hadst remained
Concealed from me! I wandered for away
When I beheld Thee in myself, I gained
For Thee and me that rapture unrestrained.

(Trs: Nila Cram Cook)

But though the antecedents of Lal Ded's Bhakti can be traced in the Shaivite mysticism of Ulpala and Bhatta Narayana, Shaivism provides only the metaphysical framework within which her poetry can be studied. Through her verses she brought the essence of Kashmir Shaivism within the reach of all, the path of Bhakti for her being the means of

attaining liberation. "It is not just a simple attitude and an unthinking act of faith", to put it the words of Krishna Sharma which she has used in the context of Kabir's concept of Bhakti, "but is a reasoned and individual act of spiritual striving". That is why we find her scathing in her attack on outer ceremony and hollow ritual in religion, her emphasis being on inner experience. She ridicules those who believe in "sacred places and sacred times", pilgrimages and fasts which to her were mere "orthodox ritual genuflections" to borrow an expression from A.K. Ramanujan. She expresses her strong abhorrence for animal sacrifice and detests idol workshop. She must have surely provoked the orthodoxy with the pot-shots which she never missed a chance to take, but she took the sharp criticism levelled at her for her unorthodox ways in its stride:

Let them hurl thousands of abuses at me
I will not entertain any grievance in my heart
If I be a true devotee of Shankar
Ashes, after all, cannot soil the mirror!

Here she unambiguously affirms her status as a Bhakta of Shankara or Shiva, and it is as this devotee, she asserts, that she does not take praise or abuse to heart. This assertion by her is significant for it also defines her concept of Bhakti – something that makes her rise above personal praise or condemnation by people. Indeed it is her deep spiritual humanism, the existential anguish that she felt while reflecting on the human condition that made her define her relationship with God. Her Bhakti can be understood only in the context of love – love that sears the heart:

My heart I parched as farmers parch the grain
And from that fire there came a wondrous boon
And Shiva in a flash I did obtain

(Trs: Nila Cram Cook)

Surely if Bhakti can be described as the rejection of "otherness" of God, then Lal Ded's verses are suffused with devotional fervour.

It is rather strange, that Shaivism and Shiva-Bhakti have been ignored in all accounts and theorizations of Bhakti, mostly by medieval Vaishnava Acharyas who have identified it with Vaishnava traditions alone. The devotional current represented by Lal Ded has its source of inspiration in Kashmir Shaivism which does not believe in a personal God but is based on the idea of complete identification of the individual self with universal consciousness. It can be understood as Bhakti only in the generic and not any sectarian sense of the term. Lal Ded or Lalleshwari's Shiva is not the Puranic Shiva to whom devotion can be directed as a personal deity but an epithet for the Ultimate Reality which is both transcendent and immanent. He is not what Krishna was to Mira, and cannot be

viewed in conjunction with *saguna* or determinate God with whom He is incompatible. This difference rooted in her concept of Shaiva non-dualism must be essentially noted while studying her as a devotional poet.

But perhaps one of the greatest statements that Lal Ded makes in her verses is through her choice of language. Instead of using the classical language of the learned traditions, Sanskrit, she uses colloquial Kashmiri of her times, the spoken language of the common people. Such linguistic preference, it must be noted, is shared by poets of all other regional Bhakti movements too. Kashmiri at that time was just emerging from the stage of a spoken regional dialect to become a modern Indo-Aryan language like Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Punjabi, Assamese etc. which did not have a literary form till at least the 9th-10th century. A.K. Ramanujan has drawn our attention to the linguistic and political reasons for this relation between language development and Bhakti which depended on the local, vernacular traditions for expression. This was, in fact, one of the definitive elements of Bhakti poetry throughout India. Sanskrit was the language of culture of the elite, of the learned few or even an inter-provincial link language, but the regional language was "the language of nature", the first language which is "continuous with the language of one's earliest childhood and family, one's local folk and folklore". It enlarged the reach of the poets, enhanced the range of their appeal and also ensured their popularity. Surely, the use of Kashmiri by Lal Ded as her medium of expression was responsible for her immense popularity with the masses. She talked to them directly in their working language, taking her images and metaphors from their everyday experiences.

The second upsurge of Bhakti movement in Kashmir was mainly Vaishnavite in character. Poets who wrote in this tradition sang praises of Vishnu as their personal God, particularly in his incarnation as Rama and Krishna. While this was a late development which took place in the 18th-19th century, its ground had been prepared as far back as the 10th-11th century or even earlier when the concepts of *Ishtadeva* (personal God), *Avatara* (incarnation) and *Lila* (divine play) took shape. According to Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, the tradition of singing devotional verses celebrating Krishna's exploits, which was prevalent in Bengal and Orissa during the 10th-11th century, was also common in "distant places like Kashmir". That is, such songs were current in the whole of India "from east to west". Obviously the tradition of such devotional lyrics in Kashmir must have been a long one just as in other parts of the country. These lyrics celebrated both local and trans-local gods besides incarnations of Vishnu whose worship had started in the country right from the time of the Gupta kings who prided in calling themselves *bhagavatas* or devotees of Vishnu. They made worship of Vishnu and his incarnations almost a state concern. It was in their time that different texts of Hindu mythology were finally given a concrete shape and were compiled as Puranas. The Krishna cult emerged in the later Gupta period providing a full scenario for enactment of Krishna Lila in poetry. In Kashmir too Lalitaditya

and Avantivarman were great patrons of art and literature like the Gupta kings. During their reigns Kashmir reached the pinnacle of its political and cultural glory with its impact lingering on for several centuries to come. They built temples dedicated to both Shiva and Vishnu, sculpted icons and patronized the Sanskrit language. As a consequence of these developments, devotion for Vishnu overflowed into celebratory songs.

Coming to Kshemendra again we find that a century before Jayadeva wrote his famous *Dashavatara* hymn in *Gita Govinda*, the Kashmiri polyglot had already composed his *Dashavatara Varnana* to describe the exploits of the ten heroic incarnations of Vishnu. At one place in this work Kshemendra writes about the pangs of separation suffered by the *gopis* after Krishna left Gokula for Mathura. He made the *gopis* sing a beautiful song on the banks of the river to express their state of mind. The song, as quoted by Hazari Parasad Dwivedi in his *Hindi Sahitya ka Adikkal*, is as follows:

Lalita vilas kala sukha khelana
Lalana lobhan shobana yauvana
Manita nava madane
Alikula kokila kuvalaya kajjala
Kala kalindasuta vigalajjal
Kaliya kula damane
Keshakishor mahasura marana
Daruna Gokula durita vidarana
Govardhana harane
Kasya na nayana yugam ratisangye
Majjati manasija tarala tarange
Vararamani ramane

It can be presumed, writes Dwivedi, that Kshemendra had heard such songs in his neighbourhood. Writing a *Dashavatara* hymn must have become a convention which has been followed by Jayadeva also. Interestingly, Kshemendra has mentioned the name of Radha in his *Dashavatara Charit*, and so has Anandavardhana, the great Kashmir aesthete of the 10th century. We find even our old Bhatta Narayana mentioning her name in one of the verses of his well-known play *Veni Samahara.*

Kalindya pulineshu kelikupitam utsrijya rase rase
Gachchhantim – anugachchatro'tra
Kalusham Kamadvisho Radhikam

All this proves that in the 9th-10th century itself not only had Radha's name become familiar to poets in Kashmir but such descriptions must have surely paved the way for the upsurge of Vaishnava Bhakti in the whole of north India. It also suggests that a distinct tradition of composing Bhakti lyrics devoted to Krishna, and also Rama must

have existed in the regional dialect of Kashmir. Although this tradition blossomed into a full-fledged trend only in the 18^{th}-19^{th} century with the arrival of poets like Paramanand, Prakash Ram Kurigami and Krishna joo Razdan, it must have continued, however feebly, in the intervening centuries too. The tradition though was interrupted to a great extent during the Muslim rule, if not obliterated altogether.

It is important to point out here that their Bhakti poems link Kashmir to the perennial mainstream of Indian literary tradition. Kashmiri Bhakti poetry may not have had the privilege of great theologists like Ramanujan to provide it with a philosophical underpinning, but there were surely scholars like Pandit Keshav Bhatta Kashmiri who played an important role in interpreting the doctrines of the Nimbarka sect. The Kashmiri Bhakti poets, however, did not align themselves with any sect or school as such. They borrowed freely from what A.K. Ramanujan calls the 'pan-Indian pool of symbology'. They shared with other poets of northern and southern Bhakti traditions as common stock of myths, legends, motifs, metaphors, images, symbols and figures, which showed that they had their roots deep in the Indian tradition.

CHAPTER 13

Lal Ded and Her Spiritual Journey

S.S. Toshkhani

What is it in the *vaakhs* or poetical utterances of Lalleshwari, the great 14th century mystic woman poet of Kashmir that continues to move and inspire and enthrall generations of the Kashmiri speaking people centuries after they fell from her lips? Is it her profound mystic insights into reality, her existential angst and anguish, her deep understanding of the human condition or the power and beauty of her imagery? Or is it her compassionate vision for spiritual liberation of mankind rooted in her Shaiva worldview? Or all these put together that constitute her poetic image? For me personally, she remains the greatest poet-saint that the Kashmiri language has ever produced. Every time I read her, I feel the joy and excitement of having explored a new world of meanings, of having ventured into what lies at the core of the peculiarly Kashmiri sense of values and ideals.

Known more popularly as Lal Ded or Mother Lalla, this venerated and celebrated Kashmiri Shaiva poetess seemed to be herself conscious of the power that she wielded over the minds of people. In one of her most poignant verses she says:

> Dress yourself in the clothes of knowledge
> And on your heart inscribe what Lalla said in verse
> For through meditation on the sacred syllable Om
> Lalla became absorbed in the light of consciousness
> And thus she overcame the awe of death.

These lines also reveal that this power had its source in her spiritual egalitarianism derived from her non-dual Shaiva vision of reality which sees the whole universe as a

manifestation of pure consciousness vibrating at every level and in every atom. She lived in times which were most critical and turbulent in the history of Kashmir, with two belief and value systems – one indigenous and the other alien – clashing ominously when Islam made its advent into the Valley. Playing a momentous role, Lal Ded saved the indigenous cultural structures from collapsing and ensured continuity by taking the essence of Kashmir Shaivism to the masses in their own native speech. Her choice of colloquial Kashmiri to pour out her heart's devotion for Shiva was perhaps the greatest statement she made in those times of political and cultural upheaval that had torn Kashmir apart, her advocacy of the devotional path reinforcing the tremendous impact this had on the common people. It struck an immediate chord with them, enlarging her reach and tremendously magnifying the range of her appeal. And today, when cataclysmic events have again shaken the Valley of Kashmir and its cultural face lies battered and bruised, Lal Ded's words of immense wisdom offer spiritual solace and succor to the wounded psyche of its people.

One thing that has been completely overlooked and, therefore, needs to be pointed out here is that it was Kashmir Shaivism which encouraged the use of the regional language for spreading its teachings. The very beginnings of Kashmiri literature are a consequence of this encouragement as can be seen in works like the *Chhummaa Sampradaaya* verses and *Mahaanaya Prakaasha*, which provide the earliest written evidence of the Kashmiri language. Lal Ded's decision to express herself in Kashmiri could well have something to do with this factor. However, it is in her *vaakhs* that we hear the first distinct heartbeats of Kashmiri poetry whereas the earlier works cannot be strictly called literary compositions.

Lal Ded's choice of *vaakh* as the medium for her poetic outpourings was indeed most appropriate. The crisp, aphoristic, cryptic four-line verse-form was quite suitable for the rhythm of thought that marked her poetic expression and was also easy for the common man to adapt to his ear and to memorize. It was no random choice, for it is around the term *vaakh* that the whole logos of Kashmir Shaivism revolves, according to which language can be a liberating force if it mirrors the reality of our life as a manifestation of universal consciousness. Abhinavagupta defines *vaakh* as *vimarsha* or "reflective awareness of the Self" – *vakti svarupam vimrishatiti vaakh.*[1] Thus, viewed from this perspective, *vaakh* is the most appropriate term for a verse form which could be used for the kind of reflective poetry that poets like Lalla composed. Before her we find Shitikantha also composing his *Mahaanaya Prakaasha* in a similar metrical form. Later Rupa Bhavaani too adopted it as the medium to express her mystical experiences. But the rich suggestiveness of meanings with which Lal Ded infused it to communicate her deep intuitive experience of reality at various levels remains unsurpassable. The question whether *vaakh* as a verse form is patterned after the Rig Vedic metres, the *Shloka* of Sanskrit, the *Aaryaa* of Praakrit or *Gaahaa* of Apabhramsha or whether it is a purely indigenous genre

may have academic relevance, but the fact remains that she extended the limits of its possibilities to the farthest horizons.

What gave her poetry its distinctive flavour, its power and punch was the vigour and vitality of her idiom, the effect being reinforced by her use of imagery taken from everyday life. The non-dual Shaivism of Kashmir, it must be noted, sought to internalize the forest rather than asking us for renunciation of the world and enjoined upon spiritual aspirants to carry on their meditative practices in the midst of the daily flow of life. It was perhaps because of this that the images evoked by her verses "sunk" in ordinary people's consciousness and became an aesthetic delight for them even though the speculative and esoteric content must have eluded the grasp of many. What Lal Ded's *vaakhs* really did was to provide them with a spiritual vision and moral strength with which they could arm their souls to meet the tremendous challenge that the times posed for them. From this point of view, Lal Ded was not a mere itinerant woman poet-saint of the 14th century, but a symbol of the continuity of five thousand years of Kashmir's civilisational ethos.

Everything about Lal Ded suggests that she was extraordinary – a spiritual and a creative genius who "had a special personality, spoke in a special voice, left a special imprint on the minds of later generations", to borrow words used by Linda Hess to describe Kabir[2] who bears many similarities to her. Yet, for all her brilliance as a poet and greatness as a saint, her dazzling mystic insights and intellectual attainments, we know very little about Lal Ded's life which is lost in a haze of numerous legends and hagiographical accounts that surrounds it. This has resulted in blurring her actual biographical profile, leaving us with little if any material that is objectively verifiable and, therefore, credible. To grope for kernels of truth in the no-man's land between fact and fiction is obviously an unenviable task that can hardly be expected to take us far.

While the Sanskrit chronicles are totally silent about Lal Ded's existence, perhaps because she lived and moved about in a milieu that had little to do with the kings and their courts, and their wars and intrigues, the Persian chronicles too say nothing about her till Muhammad Azam Dedamari refers to her as *aarifaa-kaamilaa Lalla* in his *Waaqiaat-i-Kashmir* as late as in 1746 AD. Earlier, Dawood Mishqati had mentioned her name in his hagiographical work *Asraar-ul-Abraar* (1654 AD). But what is forgotten is that the first, the very first, reference to her is by Rupa Bhavani (1620-1720), who in her *Rahasyopadesha* very clearly acknowledges Lal Ded as her guru:

Shuddham atyant vidyadharam
Lal naam lal param gvaram

(I have as my supreme guru Lalleshwari, who is pure and greatly learned.)

This is a very significant statement coming from someone who is herself regarded as a great Kashmiri woman mystic poet and is even revered as an incarnation of the Goddess Bhavani by a section of Kashmiri Pandits. The parallels between her life and that of Lal Ded are numerous, including ill treatment by the husband and his family. Not only does Rupa Bhavani refer reverentially to Lal Ded as her guru along with her own father Madhav Dhar, we find her even adopting the same poetical style and using the same verse form, *vaakh*, used by Lalla. And yet this fact, which has significant ramifications as it demolishes many a myth floated about Lal Ded, is almost completely ignored. What it proves beyond any shadow of doubt is that Lal Ded was not suddenly discovered by the Persian chroniclers while others had completely forgotten her. The fact is that Lal Ded has all along remained alive in folk memory and folk imagination, her orally transmitted verses making her virtually a wisdom tree for generations of common Kashmiris.

She must have already become a revered icon of the Kashmiri society when Rajanaka Bhaskara penned down sixty of her *vaakhs* for the first time in the Sharada script and translated them into Sanskrit sometime in the 18th century. Yet, her phenomenal popularity, even during her own lifetime, and the tremendous reverence she commanded due to the exalted stature she is said to have attained as a saint, led to determined and sustained attempts to build false image constructs around her with the sole object of appropriating her for ideologies totally alien to her and incompatible with the non-dual Kashmir Shaiva tradition that forms an integral part of her mental and intellectual make-up.

What has further complicated the situation and unleashed storms of confusion and controversy is a frenzied campaign to link her with protagonists of proselytizing Sufi orders. Orchestrated claims of interpenetration of stray Sufi elements into her poetry are made by those who profess to be scholars but are actually very uncomfortable with the fact that someone who is regarded as a symbol of whatever Kashmir stands for belongs to a different religious reality than theirs. Acting on their religious reflexes they use these so-called Sufi elements as a ploy to snatch away Lal Ded's real identity from her. There is nothing in the text of her verses to support their fabrications as whatever Lal Ded has said falls absolutely within the framework of the non-dual Shaiva philosophy of Kashmir. How else would have Rupa Bhavani accepted her as a spiritual preceptor and even imitated her style or Shams Faqir used Sanskrit yogic terms to pay a glowing poetic tribute to her? Attempts to re-slot her into conventions and systems other than to which she really belonged are motivated by intentions to subvert historical facts so that the real Lal Ded is lost to us and replaced by an unauthentic shadow. To say, for instance, that the use of wine by her as a metaphor reveals a decisive Persian mystic and, therefore, Sufi influence is to betray utter ignorance of the poetic traditions to which she belonged. It has been profusely used by her predecessor, the celebrated author of *Shivastotraavali*, Utpaldeva to describe his state of God-intoxication. At one place, for example, he exclaims:

> Drunk am I by drinking the wine of the Elixir of Immortality (*rasaayana*) which is Your worship, perpetually flowing through the channels of the senses from the goblets, full [to the overflowing] of all existing things.[3]

In the other Shaiva texts too it has been used to describe the aftermath of self-realization as a result of spiritual practice. In *Tantraaloka*, for instance, Abhinavagupta visualizes the yogi emerging after the practice of the "internally enacted" *mahaayaaga* (Great Sacrificial Rite) in the following ritual gesture:

> [The yogi's] Ritual gesture (*mudraa*) is whatever bodily posture the yogi may assume when fully absorbed in consciousness, he moves, staggering about (*ghurnita*), as it were, drunk with the wine of self realization.[4]

This being the case, it is necessary to arrive at an authentic Lal Ded – a flesh and blood one or at least a credible poetic version of what she could actually have been. And for this false constructs of her image shall have to be discarded and dumped. These, in fact, can be discredited on the grounds of chronology and historical plausibility alone. Need it to be stressed that stories fabricated for this purpose, like the so-called miracle of the oven telling us about a "nude" Lal Ded scurrying to hide herself in a baker's oven on seeing "a man for the first time", are an insult to Kashmiri womanhood. There is no way, it must be realized, that the Paramashiva of her poetry can be morphed into a Semitic Godhead, however much you may try. As Prof. B.N. Parimu puts it, "the key to Lalla's mysticism is the Shivadvaita or Trika philosophy of Kashmir."[5] And while monotheism is all exclusive, not allowing any other than a master-servant relationship between God and man, the monism of the Trika Shaivism of Kashmir is all inclusive.

It is indeed a great irony that a poetess whose verses aim to bring us face to face with our real selves should herself continue to be seen through false lenses. With those engaged in falsifying the facts of her life showing no signs of giving up, whatever their motivation, the only way left for us to arrive at an authentic Lal Ded lies through the text of her verses. Even though this text itself is marred by interpolations, her verses, in their present corrupted state also, are packed with real biographical material. In them one can discover the course of her spiritual and poetic journey and identify the various ports of call she touched and the destinations she arrived at. The risks in this approach are many as the verses have come to us through oral transmission, and certainly not in the language in which they originally were. Then of course they have been randomly recorded, giving us no clue to the actual chronological order in which they must have been composed. Yet, all these risks are worth taking.

We will not try to reinvent the events of Lalla's outer life or disregard everything that the legends say about her for the sake of it, for some of them may contain a modicum

of truth while others may belong purely to the realm of hagiography and imagination. But to reclaim her not as a mysterious abstraction but as a real persona, we can pick up the biographical threads scattered in her *vaakhs* and reconstruct with their help facts of her mystic life, her experiences as a woman, her views about the relationship between God, Man and the World.

Let us begin with the story of an introvert village girl interested more in answers to existential questions than in mundane matters. Her trauma began the day she was married to a nincompoop husband insensitive to her spiritual needs and a mother-in-law who used innovative methods to starve and torment her. Though this seems to be in line with the typical mother-in-law-daughter-in-law stories current in Indian folk lore, it may not necessarily be totally fictitious. As tradition believes, Lal Ded finally put her foot down and walked out of her unhappy marriage, snapping all ties with her husband and the tyrannical mother-in-law. The flashpoint came when, according to the legend, the husband broke with his stick the pitcher of water she had carried home all the way from the river bank. This was one of Lalla's daily chores, but that morning she was somewhat unusually late as she took a little more time in her meditations at her favourite temple of Nattakeshava Bhairava, making her husband suspect her fidelity. The pitcher broke to smithereens but the water is said to have remained as it was and she is said to have filled all the vessels in her kitchen with it. The remaining water she threw outside where it formed a pond that came to be called as Lalatraag (situated in Pampore, near Srinagar), says the legend. This became a decisive moment for her and she revolted, making it plain to the tyrant duo that she could take it no longer. Refusing to play the gender-determined role of an obedient daughter-in-law any more, she said that she was going to take her own decisions and choose her own way of life. Leaving her husband's home for ever, she became a wandering ascetic. It was in no way an easy decision for a woman to take in her time, as it left her socially unprotected and insecure.

Living her life on her own terms as an individual now, she had no one to look for guidance or help except the old Siddha Shrikantha, adept in Kashmiri Shaiva yoga who belonged to the lineage of the sage Vasugupta. Earlier in her life also she had received spiritual direction from him. On the evidence provided by her verses, one can safely come to the conclusion that she must have studied a wide range of the seminal texts of Kashmir Shaivism with the venerable Shaiva master, including the *Tantraaloka*, *Shivasutra* and *Vijnaana Bhairava*.

One cannot but wonder, therefore, to find modern Lal Ded scholars like Jaishree Kak Odin accept on the one hand that "Lalla's verses reveal her deep knowledge of the esoteric practices of Kashmir Shaivism"[6] and on the other hand use all the shrill feminist jargon at her command to make statements in her study of the saint-poet, that have really no relevance: "Her oral transmission can be seen as a subversive act to the written

discourse to which she and other people did not have access;"[7] and, "Her life in many ways represents a challenge to the prescriptive ideology of Brahminical texts, including the Gita...",[8] etc. One does not know on what evidence she describes Lalla as "an outsider to the written Kashmiri Shaiva tradition."[9] In making such sweeping observations, Jaishree Odin seems to be toeing the line of the colonial historians of yore and their present day successors, the Marxist-liberal scholars who reduce everything Hindu to "Brahminism" – a bogey some dyed-in-wool feminists also find fashionable to flaunt. Arun Shourie has aptly summed up this left-lib-feminist approach to Hinduism in the following words: "In a word, both corruption and evil on the one hand and exploitation on the other are germane to, they are inherent in Hinduism: Hinduism is Brahminism; Brahminism is that 'ism' which serves the interests of the Brahmins; these interests can only be served by the exploitation of and oppression of people of lower castes. Hence Hinduism is necessarily an arrangement for the exploitation and suppression of the mass of people."[10]

Jaishree Kak Odin knows, or should have known, that Kashmir Shaivism does not discriminate on the basis of caste, creed or gender and that the Tantric worldview it is rooted in holds the ultimate reality as feminine in essence. Her pettifogging, therefore, over whether the impersonal and transcendent reality called Shiva is male or female is inconsequential; whatever her feminist reflexes may make her to say. She surely knows that Kashmir Shaivism had its female adepts much before Lal Ded appeared on the scene, Yoginis like Keyuravati, Madanika and Kalyanika having imparted the knowledge of the doctrines of its *Krama* school to male aspirants Yogaraja, Bhanuka and Eraka, who in turn spread it to areas as far as the Chola kingdom.[11] As for oral transmission, that was how disciples were actually introduced to the theory and practice of non-dual Shaivism by their preceptors. Odin should have also remembered that the great Abhinavagupta gave priority to direct experience over knowledge of what she calls the "prescriptive texts"; and if Lal Ded did so it was not just because she was a woman, but because she was a mistress of Shaiva yoga.

Perhaps this is a digression, but it became necessary to set the perspective right. Coming back to Lalleshwari, she began a new life as a liberated woman with the quest of the divine taking her from place to place as a wandering ascetic. We do not know anything specifically about these wanderings of hers, but she renounced only the householder's life and not exactly the world as that was not the Shaiva way of approaching existential problems. All we can say is that she got Siddha Shrikantha's guidance and sympathy in full measure as she set out on her spiritual quest, even though legends say that she could not resist taking occasional potshots even at him. This is how we find her when she started her spiritual journey: tormented by loneliness, uncertainty, anxiety, self-doubt, inner conflict, yet restless to find out the deep secrets of life and death. We have

no means to know what the first *vaakh* she composed must have been, but poetry must have surely come to her as a medium to express her agony and anguish, to connect her with the eternal, the transcendent, the divine. It must have helped her to retain her equipoise amidst mental turmoil. To survive! Here is how she depicts her state of mind in probably one of her earliest though most memorable *vaakhs*:

With a rope of untwisted thread I tow my boat upon the ocean
Will my God hear me and carry me across?
Like water in vessels of unbaked clay, I am wasting away
Oh, how I long that I would reach my home!

This verse evokes the image of a forlorn and frail woman fighting rising waves to tow her rickety boat across a perilous sea with a prayer to God on her lips and restlessness in heart to reach the other shore where her home is. Sounding more like an anguished cry, it shows how vulnerable and weak Lal Ded must have felt when she embarked on her God-ward journey. How unsure of herself. How helpless. Towing boats in turbulent waters is a common scene in Kashmir and the metaphor of crossing *bhavasaagar* or the sea of existence is often used by Bhakti poets. But how touchingly personal it has become here, the words "untwisted thread" creating a tremendous effect. And how untouched and beautiful is the associated image of being wasted like water in vessels of unbaked clay. This is typical Lalla – original and extremely creative. The feeling of frustration and utter fruitlessness of all efforts that this metaphor expresses is really moving.

In fact, Lal Ded's verses are an intimate record of her sufferings and struggles, her aspirations and achievements. Sometimes they show her beset with lack of self-confidence and overcome with despair and frustration. Sometimes they depict her restlessness to establish a personal relationship with Shiva, the pangs of separation that torment her mind and the intense desire of absorption in Him. There are also times when she realizes that it is her own imperfections and weaknesses, her own un-preparedness and follies which are hindering her progress towards her destination. But the most memorable of her verses are those that reveal her heart's wounds from under the saffron robes of detachment:

I Lalla went forth in the hope of blooming like a cotton flower
Many a blow did the ginner and the carder give to me
And the spinning woman spun me into a fine yarn
The weaver stretched me on his loom with a kick
But when the washerman dashed me on the washing stone
And rubbed me hard with fuller's earth and soap
And the tailor's scissors cut me piece by piece
Then did I, Lalla, obtain the way of the Supreme.

Here Lalla uses the analogy of the process of manufacturing a garment from a cotton pod to illustrate the suffering she has endured at various stages of her spiritual development. At each stage the progress is extremely slow, but there is no way but to go through this entire excruciating process to reach the final stage of perfection.

In another verse she tries to say that she is well aware that she is ill equipped for pursuing her spiritual goals. She simply does not have the wherewithal for it, she feels:

For my wooden bow, I have a reed for an arrow!
An unskilled carpenter for building my royal mansion!
In the marketplace, a shop unguarded am I
A body uncleansed by waters holy
Oh how can I tell my plight!

How can she expect to hit the target when the arrow she has on her bow is but a blade of rush grass. The carpenter she has got to build her royal mansion is totally unskilled, she laments, referring to her body. Her physical and mental faculties, she feels, are hardly developed to help her transcend her limitations. She is just not in shape to go for the ultimate goal. And whatever little merit she may have already acquired, she is in the danger of loosing in her unguarded moments, like a shop without a lock in a busy marketplace which can be easily burgled. Her mind is like a flock without a shepherd with its thoughts like sheep running in all directions.

The feeling of being "suspended in the emptiness between two worlds, one which she has just left and one whose threshold she has not yet crossed but whose door, soon to close again had opened slightly,"[12] overtakes her. That is what she seems to express in this verse:

The sling of my candy load is loosened
Bent is my body like a bow
I don't know how to carry this burden?
My guru's words have pained me like a blister of loss
Like a flock without a shepherd I have become

The weight of worldly pleasures, "sweet and enticing as candy" has begun to hurt as the "shoulder knot" that holds it on her back has loosened a bit "because of her entry into the mystic life", but the burden has now become more unbearable. Even her guru's words are proving of little help as he has told her to give up allurements of worldly things and concentrate on meditating on her inner self. And this she is not able to do because she finds that materiality still distracts her.

In yet another verse we find Lalla assailed by self-doubt and feelings of uncertainty and helplessness. The fear of loosing direction and being stranded midway between what she has given up and what she is yet to achieve overtakes her:

I came by the highway but by the highway I did not return
Stranded I am now halfway on the embankment
And the light of the day has already faded
I searched my pockets but not a penny did I find
What shall I now pay to the ferryman for ferrying me across?

Desperateness seizes her as she feels that she does not have the means to reach the other shore of transcendence. In terms of Shaiva praxis, the problem with Lalla as a questing mystic is that she is disempowered because forces operating outside her consciousness are crippling her. To move towards empowerment, she needs to undergo more rigorous discipline and strenuous practice. *Gururupayah*, the guru is the means, says the *Shivasutra*.[13] So she approaches her guru for guidance, and the first thing he tells her is to withdraw from the external world and turn her gaze into the inner core of her being:

My Guru said but one thing you must know,
How, from within, still further in to go
The words became my precept and my chance
And so it is, I Lalla, naked dance.
(Translation by Nila Cram Cook)

What the guru is stressing here is interiority, or inwardness, which is one of the fundamental features of practice in Kashmir Shaivism. It is important for the Shaiva aspirant to realize that everything resides within our own consciousness and nothing exists outside it. As Mark S.G. Dyczkowski writes:

> This all embracing inwardness is only possible if there is an essential identity between the universe and consciousness. The events which constitute the universe are always internal events happening within consciousness because their essential nature is consciousness itself.[14]

In Kashmir Shaiva terminology, this is called *atmavyapti*. Shaivism suggests two methods to realize non-duality between the self and the universe: *atmavyapti* and *Shivavyapti*. In *atmavyapti* or self-expansion, the universe is seen as an expansion of the self and the seeker merges the external world into his/her inner consciousness to realize the self within himself/herself. In *Shivavyapti*, the process reaches its fruition "when the

inner knowledge gained is applied to the external world in extrovert meditation" and "the outer is looked upon as a gross form of the inner", as Dyczkowski puts it.[15]

Yet, ignoring what it actually seeks to convey, the meaning of this verse has been completely mutilated. The connection of the last line is severed from the context provided by the first three lines and her emphasis on the ecstasy of inwardness is treated as Lal Ded's self-confession of wandering in the nude. The word used in the original Kashmiri is *natsun*, which means "to dance" and also obliquely "to wander". So it is subjected to willful distortion and taken to mean that Lalla actually disrobed and went about in that state without caring for social conventions of decorum or decency. This is hardly credible as wandering naked in the freezing temperatures of Kashmir winters is just not possible. Besides, Lal Ded herself in several of her verses talks of the necessity for feeding and clothing the body. Trying to explain things, Georg Feurestein expresses the view that "the nudity attributed is a symbol of her profound surrender to Shiva, which stripped her of all egoic motivation."[16] I personally feel that Lal Ded's statement about her so-called disrobing could well be a reference to discarding the *panchakanchukas* or the five coverings of Maya that conceal the real nature of the self. And of course the word *natsun* could be literally taken to mean dancing in the ecstatic state of God-consciousness. But even if she did move about scantily clad, challenging the orthodoxy and throwing the rigid conventional codes of dress and decorum to the winds, like the Kannada saint poetess Mahadeviakka, it can be taken as her last act of defiance against an oppressive social system whose gender discriminatory rules she just could not accept.

Lal Ded was in a greatly disturbed state of mind after she turned her back to her husband's home and took a leap into the dark to set out on the unexplored path to mystic realization. Rejecting a socially protected life, she finds herself vulnerable and exposed to every kind of insecurity and anxiety, including that of staving off hunger, as this verse seems to suggest:

O restless mind, do not be afraid!
The Eternal One is taking care of you
You may not know it, but He will satiate your hunger
To Him alone you must cry for help.

In another verse she says:

Do not torment your body with pangs of hunger and thirst
When it feels weak and weary, take tender care of it.

While she faces the harsh realities of life like hunger and poverty with a sense of surrender before the divine will, and is intensely aware of the agony and anguish of existence, she is greatly excited about the tremendous possibilities of transformation as

she passes through various phases of her mystic life. As her verses reveal, her sensibilities are constantly assailed by the immensity of human suffering at all levels – existential as well as spiritual. But for her its solution lies in the benevolent grace of Shiva, for mystic union with whom her craving and longing intensifies day by day:

I, Lalla, set out with burning longing
And seeking, searching passed the day and night
Till lo, I saw to mine own house belonging
The Pandit, and seized my luck and star of light.
(Translation by Nila Cram Cook)

In some English translations the word *pandith* (Pandit) of the original Kashmiri has become "a learned man", but here it refers to "the master of the house", a sense in which it is still used in common Kashmiri parlance. Symbolically, it means the Self, while the word "house" symbolizes the human body. Interestingly, the Kannada Vachana poet Basvanna also invokes the symbolism of "the master of the house" in a similar sense.

We now see Lalla expressing her mystic feelings – the pangs of separation, the pain of ecstatic love, the burning passion of the desire for communion, the frustration of loosing the direction, the total surrender of ego before His will, the determination to surmount all difficulties in love's way and the ecstasy of the final beatitude. Her efforts to overcome the limitations and weaknesses that "bind her to the material reality" and impede her progress intensify. She realizes that the great agony she has endured has its roots in innate ignorance. She tries to arm herself with a clearer vision and a greater awareness and sets out in a frantic search of Shiva:

I, Lalla wearied myself searching and seeking
Straining my every nerve I looked for Him
But found His doors slammed and bolted
My longing became all the more intense
And I stood there keeping a watchful eye for Him.

To express her personal mystical awareness of the Supreme Reality, Lal Ded takes the route of devotion, laying bare the wounds of her soul to Shiva, though her devotion is laced with speculative knowledge. As her *vaakhs* reveal, she combines her quest for gnostic illumination with the depth of her emotional experience. The ease with which she establishes an emotional relationship with Shiva, the ineffable, impersonal and formless God of Trika metaphysics, making him look personal, points to her genius both as a saint and a poet. In fact, mystical traditions "have sought and affirmed the possibility of such a relationship". Lal Ded tries to make it compatible through her splendid imagery which she takes from her everyday experience. Kashmir Shaivism, it must be noted, does not

regard this experience to be different from spiritual experience. Through her simple but spontaneous utterances she attunes our mind to the presence of the divine as the one consciousness pervading the whole universe.

Translating her spiritual experience into soul-stirring poetry, Lalla makes her entry into another phase of her mystic journey. It is a crucial phase marked by profound devotional fervour, with love for the divine helping her overcome depression and despair. But it would be wrong to give this mystic strain a Sufi context as it is located in the Shaiva Bhakti tradition represented by great poets like Bhatta Narayana and Utpaldeva who preceded Lal Ded, although they expressed themselves in Sanskrit.

It is Bhatta Narayana, a direct disciple of Vasugupta (9th century), who can be considered as the first poet of devotional non-dual Shaivism in Kashmir. He authored *Stavachintamani* or "The Wishing Jewel of Praise", a poem of 120 verses dedicated to love directed towards Shiva. It has as its main theme the union of Shiva and Shakti in the form of *prakasha* and *vimarsha* or light and self-awareness. Utpaldeva (10th century), a brilliant thinker and theologian besides a great poet, who followed Bhatta Narayana, wrote the *Shivastotravali* or "The Series of Hymns to Shiva", which in the words of Paul E. Murphy is the "most beautiful of Shaiva love songs."[17] In this work, he expresses himself in an impassioned form of devotional verse in a personal and touching style.

Together, the three of them – Bhatta Narayana, Utpaldeva and Lalleshwari – can be regarded as the foremost representatives of Shaiva Bhakti poetry of Kashmir, with the difference that Lalleshwari chose to express herself in Kashmiri, the language of the common masses, while the former two poets wrote in Sanskrit. All of them display a sense of harmony between rigorous metaphysical thought and mystic experience, self-awareness and devotional fervour. Though Lal Ded appeared on the scene nearly four hundred years after these two predecessors of hers, she shared with them a sharp feeling of the immediate presence of Shiva, the Divine Being, and a mind inflamed by a powerful longing for him. Her poetry, like theirs, stems from an intense sense of resignation to the divine will and reflects her vivacity, vitality and deep sincerity. Lalla approaches Shiva yearning intensely to attain mystic communion with Him. There are times when He seems to elude her but she refuses to give up the search and appears more determined to find Him and even possess Him:

> I diffused outside the light that lit up within me
> And in that darkness I seized Him
> And held Him tight!

Images and metaphors relating to the concept of Shiva's self-luminosity abound in Shaiva devotional poets. The 'darkness' that Lal Ded talks about is the dark 'Mystical Night of Differentiation' accompanied by anguish and suffering, but it ultimately leads

to the bright 'Night of Un-differentiation'. The image that Lalla evokes here bears a striking similarity to some of Bhatta Narayana's images. In one such image Bhatta Narayana shows himself clenching Shiva and holding Him in his fist with an impassioned cry:

Here you are, I am holding you in my fist!
Here you are, I've seen you, where are you fleeing?
(*Stavachintamani*: Translation by Paul E. Murphy)

Utpaladeva too describes this Mystical Night, and calls it the Night of Shiva:

Let this inexpressible Night of Shiva reign supreme
Shiva whose radiant essence spreads its own brightness
It is in it that the moon and the sun as well as other (dualities)
Penetrate when they set.
(*Shivastotravali*: Translation by Paul E. Murphy)

Abhinavagupta describes this Night of "undifferentiated and ineffable" Shiva as "Light of all Lights, darkness of all darknesses". Lal Ded uses this symbolism of the Mystical Night in several other verses also, as in the following one:

The day will be extinguished and the night will come
The earth will be extended to the sky
On the day of the new moon, the moon has swallowed up rahu
Realization of the self as consciousness is the true worship of Shiva.

The Kashmiri Shaivite aspirant believes that suffering and sorrow will continue to depress the individual soul unless it achieves *samaavesha* or complete absorption with Shiva, the undifferentiated reality. This is possible only by elimination of mental states and thought constructs (*vikalpas*) through yoga. The soul has to rid itself of all the impurities and limitations that are the root cause of its predicament. In Shaiva terminology the limiting factors that give rise to the perception of duality are known as *malas* and there are three of them – *aanava mala*, *kaarma mala* and *maayiya mala*. *Aanava mala* or "pollution of the miniscule" as Wagish Shukla calls it, is innate ignorance which conceals the individual soul's real nature and metamorphoses it into a limited being devoid of universal consciousness. From this primary impurity arises *kaarma mala* or the impurity of action, which implies "pseudo knowledge" that entangles the soul in the karmic cycle of birth and death, and *maayiya mala* or the psycho-physical limitation caused by association with the evolutes of *maayaa-kalaa* or division, *niyati* or determinancy, *raaga* or attachment, *vidyaa* or limited knowledge and *kaala* or time, also known as the *panchakanachukas* or five coverings – which cause the world to come about according to Shaiva theory of cosmogenesis. These impurities bring into play the process by which

pure, undivided consciousness or Paramashiva concretizes into the universe covering 36 categories of limited, material existence. For overcoming these limitations and liberating the individual soul from bondage, Triadic mysticism offers a whole range of meditative techniques or methods known as *upaayas*. Lalleshwari appears to be fully aware of these and claims to have purified herself of all the impurities caused by Maya and its evolutes through intense practice and yogic discipline. She claims:

Impurities were wiped away from my mind
As from a mirror
Then only did I attain knowledge of the Self
And when I beheld that He was near me
I realized that He is all and I am nothing.

Here the use of mirror as a metaphor needs particular attention. It is through the analogy of external objects reflected in a mirror that Shaiva thinkers of Kashmir explain how manifestations of consciousness are "separated from the Self". In several other verses also Lalla claims that she has purified her mind by burning the dross that had gathered around it and prevented the self from revealing its true nature. As, for instance, in this one:

My heart I parched as farmers parch the grain
And from that fire there came a wondrous light
And Shiva in a flash I did obtain.

(Translation by Nila Cram Cook)

Lal Ded, it is said, attained enlightenment by practicing the *kundalini* or *layayoga* which involves "meditative recitation of the sacred syllable Om combined with breath control and concentration". The practice is actually known as *uchchaara* and is included under *aanava upaaya* in Shaiva praxis. There are several *vaakhs* in which Lalla clearly refers to it. For instance, we have the following verse:

Having crossed the six forests, I awakened the moon
By controlling my breath I appeased nature
With the fire of love, I scorched my heart
And in this way I found Shankara.

The "six forests" are obviously the six *chakras* or centres of energy (plexuses) which the yogis seek to 'pierce' by arousing the coiled energy *kundalini*. The 'moon' in esoteric Shaivism symbolizes "enlightened consciousness" or "the Heart of reality", as Paul Eduardo Ortega-Muller explains, quoting Abhinavagupta.[18]

The yoga that Lal Ded practiced appears to have encompassed the various *upaayas* – *aanava*, *shaakta*, *shaambhava* and also *anuttara* or *anupaya* – described in the Kashmir Shaiva texts as means to liberation. Her verses are replete with references to her intense *saadhanaa*. However, it is not just her impressive use of the terminology of Shaiva yogic techniques that makes Lalla what she is. It is the "fire of love" burning within her heart and denoting intense mystical fervour that animates her *vaakhs*. Purifying her body and mind in this fire of spiritual passion, Lalla now acquires the mature poise of a soul who has arrived on the threshold of mystic realization.

Yogic experiences, we find, have exorcised the fears and tensions lurking in Lalla's mind and uplifted her from the state of despondence and depression into the realm of divine grace. Trying to put her imperfections and limitations behind her, she moves decisively in her spiritual journey from gross to subtle, from object to subject, from outer to inner, experiencing higher and higher ranges of consciousness. It is a journey in which the infinite is reached by discarding the trappings of finitude and recognition of one's true nature as Shiva – the transcendent absolute whose infinity pervades everything. The vision of Shiva being apparent everywhere is a transforming vision that frees a person from assertion of ego and one no longer sees oneself different from others. It is to this emancipating vision we see Lalla referring to in her poetry when she says:

> One who sees no difference between oneself and others
> Who regards the day and the night as the same
> Whose mind is free of all duality
> S/he alone has the vision of Shiva, the lord of the gods.
>
> You will see different people in this theatre of the world
> Tolerate this difference and you will find happiness
> If you root out anger, resentment and ill-will
> Then alone you will see Shiva's face.

It is thus the unique spiritual egalitarianism of non-dual Shaiva philosophy which celebrates life and rejects the otherness of God that shapes Lalla's outlook. Inspired by this mystic vision, she sees Shiva as a universally pervasive principle of consciousness. In a verse she emphasizes the oneness of all existence beautifully by using the three states of water as a metaphor:

> Cold changes water into snow and then into ice
> It looks as if the three states are different
> But on reflection we find there to be no difference
> And as the sun of consciousness shines
> All this diversity is dissolved into unity.

Then the entire universe, animate and inanimate, seems to us to be Shiva Himself.

Lal Ded finally attains the rapturous state of illumination. It is supposed to be an experience that is inexpressible and indescribable, but she tries to share it with us in several of her verses:

In seeking 'me' and 'Thee' I passed the day
Absorbed within Thyself Thou hadst remained
When I beheld Thee in myself, I gained
For Thee and me that rapture unrestrained.

(Translation by Nila Cram Cook)

At the end of moonlight to the mad one did I call
And soothe his pain with the love of God
Crying 'It is Lalla, it is I Lalla', my loved one I awakened
And by becoming one with Him my mind and body became pure.

"The end of moonlight", of course means the early dawn when the night of ignorance is over. "The mad one" is none else but the mind, "intoxicated and maddened by worldly illusion". "The loved one" who is "awakened" by Lalla is the self.

The first step in this mystic progression is "self-annihilation or destruction of all doubt and dualism", and the culmination is one's Shiva nature. It is an inexpressible and indescribable state in which nothing remains except Shiva-consciousness.

In telling images Lal Ded tries to describe the state of her mind as she attunes herself to feeling Shiva's presence everywhere and in everything, naturally and freely. As one ineffable and undifferentiated reality, He transcends all polarities and yet is immanent as Shakti, making Himself known through the world of phenomena which She unfolds as His creative power. The two, in fact, are not separate from one another but two aspects of the one absolute reality. Lalla experiences the bliss of their union as she enters the garden of her own heart. And it is there that she finally quenches her thirst for the "nectar of un-differentiation":

Through the door to the garden of my mind
I, Lalla, entered and lo what bliss!
I saw Shiva in communion with Shakti
There I became immersed in the lake of nectar
Now what can Death do unto me?
For I shall be dead even though alive!

This is the height of mystic experience that Lalla now attains – the state of becoming a *jivanmukta* or liberated while still alive. In such a state death ceases to have any meaning.

Lalla's tremendous sense of wonder at the blissful union of Shiva and Shakti that she experiences within her own self finds expression in the words "ta wah". Her unifying vision of the simultaneous unfolding of the harmony of both evolution and involution, the transcendent and immanent aspects of the Ultimate Reality is what constitutes absorption of ones consciousness in the infinite vastness of the void. This sense of wonder is the yogic plane of self-realization, as the Shiva Sutras say – *vismayo yoga bhumikah.*[19] The "lake of nectar" she refers to is the same as the "ocean of nectar of enlightenment" (*bodhasudhaa sindhu*) which Kshemaraaja alludes to in his explanation of another aphorism – *aasanastham sukham hrade nimajjati* (Abiding in this posture he plunges easily into the lake) in his *Shiva Sutra Vimarshini*. The imagery of immersion (*laygayas*) is to be particularly noted here with implications of absorption, submersion, dissolution which all point to the wondrous delight of *samaavesha*.

Yet, even in the state of rapturous union with Shiva "full of incomparable sweetness" which has "filled the abyss of separation"[20] as Utpaldeva says, the ecstasy may last only for a moment like "a flash of lightening".[21] It is *samaavesha* or total immersion in the Lord that the Shaiva mystic craves for. Like Utpaldeva, Lalla too is apprehensive that she may not after all be able to drink from the "cups of nectar" full to the brim that she sees tantalizingly before her:

> Absorption in the Self led me to that house of nectar
> There were cups filled to the brim but no one was drinking.

Eventually, Lalla reaches a stage where she acquires an uninterrupted and unmediated awareness of the Ultimate Reality. This is *anupaya* or 'no-means' in which there is direct experience of reality without recourse to any means. If all is Shiva, then there is nothing for the seeker to do but to remain as he or she is. Here all contradictions resolve and all opposites merge. The difference between subject and object, liberation and bondage disappears. It is an experience of the absolute beyond transcendence and immanence (Shiva and Shakti), existent or non-existent. It is about this state that Lalla speaks in this verse:

> Nothing exists there
> Word or mind, manifest or transcendent
> Nor vow of silence, nor yogic gestures
> Have any admission there
> Nor Shiva, nor His Shakti there reside
> If anything remains then take that as the precept.

At another place we find her saying:

Neither you, nor I, nor meditation or its object exists
All actions are forgotten automatically
The blind could make nothing of it
But the wise became one with this supreme state.

Lalla attempts to express her experience of immersion into the ineffable reality called Shiva, whose essence is inconceivable and beyond contemplation except in terms of the concept of *shunya* or emptiness. She takes us along this difficult metaphysical terrain with relative ease. Her favourite expression *shunyas shunyah milith gav* (emptiness has merged with the emptiness) is widely relished by her readers though its actual meaning evades the understanding of most of them. The term *shunya* has actually been taken by Kashmir Shaivite philosophers from Maadhyamika Buddhism (or is it *vijnanavaada* of Yogaachaara School?), but interpreted in their own way by them to denote 'fullness' of the Absolute. Lalla often uses it to point to her state of absorption into the Supreme:

When the sun disappeared, there remained moonlight
When the moon vanished, only mind remained
When the mind too disappeared, then nothingness was left
Then earth, ether and sky merged into vacuity.

When the Tantras disappeared, the mantras remained
When mantra disappeared, the mind remained
When mind too disappeared then nothing remained
Emptiness merged with the emptiness.

The vicissitudes that Lal Ded goes through to arrive at the threshold of this experience are many. She traverses, in fact, a reverse journey from manifestation to undifferentiated awareness, from the categories of existence to the supreme subjectivity of Paramashiva, from the gross to the subtle and subtler. It is a process that involves piercing of the veils of Maya and expansion of consciousness to include the entire universe as one's own self. It does not take place in any external realm but in one's own mind.

Though He was within, I searched for him outside
The control of breath soothed my nerves
Through meditation, I realized that the world and God are one
The manifest world became one with the unmanifest.

Kashmir Shaivism is a life-affirmative philosophy that regards the human body as an abode of the divine. It validates the reality of the material world and considers consciousness to be the substratum and ground of everything. "As it is there so it is here",

yathaa tatra tathaa anyatra,[22] says the Shivasutra. As such, what is outside is not different from the core of one's own inner being. And that is what is integral to Lal Ded's thinking also.

Lalla's mystic journey to realization was by no means an easy one. She attained the spiritual heights she came to scale after straining every nerve. She tells us of her excruciating experience in quite a few of her verses:

> The soles of my feet tore off and smeared the paths I walked
> Then the One alone showed me the one true path.

But she emerges from this ordeal unscathed and brimming with self-confidence. It is a new Lalla, transformed in both body and mind. And she talks about this transformation with a new sense of self-assurance and in an unusually ecstatic tone:

> The soul is ever new, the mind is new,
> The waste of water I saw new and new!
> Since body, mind I scoured through and through
> I, Lalla, too, am ever new and new.
>
> (Translation by Nila Cram Cook)

Her illumination to her is a real experience and she begins to see things in a new light. Her journey, she realizes, has been actually a journey of self-discovery in which it is Shiva who sets out in search of Shiva for Shiva is All – *ora ti paanay yora ti paanay* (It is he Himself on this side and He Himself on the other).

As a spiritual genius whose face radiated all the wisdom of an enlightened Shaiva sage (I diffused my inner light in the world outside), Lal Ded now starts wandering from place to place to share her insights with everybody who cared to listen. Displaying a Bodhisattva like compassion, she tries to reach out to the common people and engages in discourse with them. Shiva is not someone out there, she tells them, Shiva is everywhere. Shiva is everyone's innate nature.

This must have certainly had a great impact on all those who came to Lal Ded for spiritual guidance. She seems to have known her audience well to which she explained the Triadic (*trika*) vision of oneness of God, man and the world in an idiom it could easily understand. And surely, despite her occasional admonishments and ruing that she is wasting her time "feeding molasses to asses", it seems that she shared rather eagerly with admiring and appreciative groups of people her insights into the secrets of existence.

However, a non-conformist as she was, a rebel in her total rejection of outer ceremony, animal sacrifice, fasts and other shams and pretences, sacred dates and sacred places, and other forms of religious shams and pretences against which we find her lashing out in her *vaakhs*, must have offended some sections of the society of her times. To her these were

mere "orthodox ritual genuflections", to borrow an expression from A.K. Ramanujan,[23] but her scathing attacks evoked hostility from the orthodoxy for which religious formalism was an accepted way of life. Not taking it kindly, they reacted sharply and in turn subjected her to mocks and jeers. She, however, remained unruffled, taking all the slander in its stride and refusing to get provoked, her humanistic impulses anchored in her Shaiva ethos, a way of looking at the world (*Shivadrishti*), guiding her even in her relations with her detractors:

Let them hurl thousands of abuses at me,
I will not entertain any grievance in my mind
If I a true devotee of Shankara be
How can ashes stain the mirror, after all?

Here Lal Ded unambiguously affirms her status as a *Bhakta* of Shankara, and it is in this capacity that adoration or abuse does not disturb her equanimity. This is an important assertion as Bhakti for her is not "just a simple attitude and an unthinking act of faith", to put it in the words of Krishna Sharma which she uses in while talking of Kabir, "but a well reasoned and individual act of spiritual striving."[24] Indeed it is her intense longing to be immersed in the love of the divine that gives her poetry the distinct flavour it has. But the Shankara she pines for is not the popular anthropomorphic deity of the Puraanic pantheon, determinate and personal. He is the transcendental reality with no name or form or attributes, the ground and support of all animate and inanimate beings – "the void of absolute consciousness" as Swami Shankaraananda describes Him.[25] Yet the Kashmiri Shaivite devotional poet has no difficulty in experiencing Him in intimate and personal terms as we have already pointed out earlier. Lalla, and before her Bhatta Narayana and Utpaladeva, echo the paradox in their poetry which is as charged with love as the best of devotional verse addressed to any personal deity. Lalla says:

My guru I asked a thousand times
What is the name of Him who has no name
Again and again I asked till I became weary and tired
Out of this nothing something has come out.

He is nameless as he is beyond thought, but his name is All-Names, to use the words of Mark S.G. Dyczkowski,[26] "It is a man who gives It a name to aid in his quest for enlightenment", Dyczkowski writes, "and endear it to his own heart."[27] Thus, he is called Shiva, Bhairava, Maheshvara, Parameshvara, Shambhu and so on by the great Shaivite sages like Vasugupta, Utpala, Kallata, Somananda, Abhinavagupta, Kshemaraaja and others, Shankara being the name mostly preferred by the preceptors of the Spanda School, and Bhairavanaatha and Parameshvara by Abhinavagupta. Lalleshvari too calls Shiva by

a host of names,.some of them like Shyaamagalaa (the Blue-throated One), Surgurunaatha uniquely her own. However, what is quite interesting is that like the *Sahjiyaa Siddhas* or the *Naathapanthis* she has used the term "sahaj" at a few places to describe the Ultimate Reality:

For realizing the Ultimate one does not need
restraint or self-control
The door to liberation will not open through mere wishing.

Into this universe of birth I came,
By yoga gained the self-revealing light.

The Sahajiyaas practiced a form of Tantric yoga as the most natural or easy way to attain the experience of *sahaja* or the Ultimate Reality. And like them the Kashmiri Shaivites too believe in attainment of *sahaja samaadhi* or mystical trance as the natural state of liberation for the siddha yogis. The term *sahaja* is frequently used by them to denote the highest state of enlightenment which they regard as synonymous with *anupaaya* which comes naturally and directly as intuitive realization annulling the requirement for any kind of practice. Lal Ded's rejection of restraint and austere practices is perfectly in keeping with the six-limbed (*shadaanga*) yoga propounded by Jayaratha and Kshemaraaja. The point sought to be made here is that the two *vaakhs* of Lalleshvari quoted above help in confirming the link between the *Sahajiyaa Siddhas* and Kashmir Shaivism. Paul Muller-Ortega quotes Mircea Eliade to show that such links did indeed exist not with the Sahajiyaas alone but also with the Hatha Yogis and the Naatha Panthis.[28] The synthesis that Eliade says took place among elements of Sahajiyaa taantrism (both Hindu and Buddhist), Naathas and the Hatha yogis between the seventh and the eleventh century, "deserves close scrutiny" says Muller-Ortega, pointing out that "the Kaula lineage (in Kashmir Shaivsim) is one of the important sources for this synthesis."[29] The question arises was Lal Ded directly aware of these "sources"? Did she have any links with the elements that were components of this synthesis?

Lalla gives this yearning of oneness with Shiva as the transcendent reality a unique twist by expressing her desire to be one with His immanent aspect also. If "Shiva is all" then how can He be different from the ordinary man – the man on the street who laughs and sneezes and coughs and yawns, she says in a powerful yet totally ignored verse:

Yes He it is Who laughs and coughs and yawns
He, the ascetic naked all the year,
Who bathes in sacred pools in all the dawns
But recognize how He to you is near.

(Translation by Nila Cram Cook)

There are dimensions of Lal Ded's personality and creativity which have to be explored before we can understand the entire range of her attainments. So far not much has been done in this direction with most studies of the great medieval saint-poetess remaining hardly any thing more than clichéd statements full of oversimplifications, vague generalizations, contradictions or distortions that tend to strip her of her real glories. There are some who have tried to link her humanistic concerns and her acute social awareness with superficial issues of present day political debates. Looking for communitarian ideas in her verses, they have twisted her spiritual humanism and interpreted it in an arbitrary manner to suit their ideological predilections. Though she is deeply troubled by the sorrow and suffering that prevails as a part of the human condition, she sees its solution only in the realization of man's essential divinity – 'Shivahood' to use the term of Kashmir Shaiva philosophy in which her worldview is anchored. Everything is Shiva and therefore Shiva is everything. Nothing is separate from the eternality of existence. Creation and dissolution, life and death are aspects of a process that never ceases. Human life is an eternal flow of consciousness, a stream that flows onwards and onwards:

We have been there in the past
And in the future we shall be
Forever the sun rises and sets
Forever Shiva creates and dissolves and creates again.

It is this view of reality that is at the core of Lalla's mystic realization. Lal Ded's poetry continues to dazzle us with its million watt incandescence, its meaning unfolding at several levels. She started her spiritual journey as a tormented soul but attained a stage where self-realization and self-awareness gave her inner strength and the confidence that derived from that strength. If Lal Ded's immense impact on the Kashmiri mind has practically remained undiminished despite the passage of almost seven centuries, it is essentially because of the fusion of the poet and the saint in her. Or, to borrow the words of Dileep Chitre, which he has used for the great Bhakti poet Tukaram, it is because of "a poet's vision of spirituality and a saint's vision of poetry" which she presents in her *vaakhs*.

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CHAPTER 14

Political Content in the *Vaakhs* of Lal Ded

R.L. Bhat

Lal Ded, Lal Maa'j or Lalleshvari is supposed to be the best known Kashmiri poetess. Though she lived in the 14th century AD, there is no mention of her in the historical accounts of Kashmir written during three centuries following her death viz., the chronicles by Jonaraja (1459) Shrivara (1484) Prajyya Bhat (1513) and Shuka (1586), *Tarikh-i-Sayid Ali* (1579), *Baharistan-i-Shahi* (1610) and Haidar Malik's *Tarikh-i-Kashmir* (1621). The first mention of Lal Maa'j (Mother Lal), occurs in the Persian hagiography *Tazkirat-ul-Arifin* of Baba Ali, which was written in 1563, but no details of her birth, life or death, are given in it.[1]

There is a fair degree of certainty only regarding a few points about her life: that she came to fame during the mid-14th century in Alla-ud-din's rule (1344-56 AD); that she died during his son Shahab-ud-din's kingship, i.e., prior to 1378 AD; and that she lived to a ripe old age. These points help us to assign her to the first three quarters of the14th century. If she lived a long life, as all are agreed, she would've been born in the first decade of the century but before the end of the second decade. Hasan Khoyahami, the author of *Tarikh-i-Hasan*,[2] says: "She was born in the 7th century of the Hijri Era in a Hindu family of Sempora but the date and day of the birth is not known." This is taken as the year 700 Hijri, corresponding to 1301 AD by Koul.[3] Collating the two statements, Lal Ded can be said to have been born before the second decade of the 14th century AD.

Her death must have taken place before 1378 AD, which is the year of Shihab-ud-din's death. Thus her life span can be reckoned between 1301/1317 and 1378 AD.

The 14th century is the beginning of a most tumultuous period in the history of Kashmir. Around the first decade of this century, one fugitive and two adventurists entered Kashmir, got asylum there, received the hospitality of the Valley and ultimately came to lord over it. Their growth to kingship coincided with the growth of baby Lal to her young age. During this period – vital and formative as it must have been for the growing maiden – Kashmir saw two barbaric invaders (Dulachu or Zulucha and Urdun[4] or Achala) enter Kashmir within a decade of each other and wreck huge devastation thereupon before leaving the Valley with a booty of men and materials. Fortunately for Kashmir their stay in the land lasted less than a year, but the scars they inflicted were much deeper.

Though the two preceding centuries had seen almost the whole of north India being run over by foreign invaders from Afghanistan and beyond, and Muslim Rule had been established in Delhi more than a century before that, kings of Kashmir had stoutly defended the Valley against incursions. This strong defence of the Valley is described in 1003 AD in the chronicle of Alberuni,[5] who tells us that nothing could get past its mountain defence. The beginning of the 14th century sees these defences cracking and letting in adventurers and fortune-seekers and finally the barbaric invaders. In the early years of the third decade of the century, Rinchen the fugitive succeeded in grabbing power in the backdrop of Zulcha's incursion. King Sahdeva, who had fled on Zulcha's invasion, never came back, leaving it to his commander Ramchandra to defend the Valley. He eliminated Ramchandra, married his daughter Kota and assumed power in the kingdom. Though Rinchen died within two and a half years of his becoming the king due to the efforts of Sahdeva's brother Udyandeva, the after-effects of the brief interlude of his rule were very far-reaching.

This gave Shah Mir, the first of the adventurers to have entered[6] Kashmir at the start of the century, great clout at the court and in fact in the whole of the state. Though Kota now married Udyandeva and the kingship again passed into the hands of the Kashmiris, the strongman from Swat[7] could not be ignored. Kota better known as Kota Rani was said to have had a son by Rinchen who was named Chandra or Haidar.[8] What is significant is that this child was given to the custody of Shah Mir, and not his mother. Shah Mir, is said to have taken the boy to the court to vex Udyandeva. This points to the rising power of Shah Mir as well as the kingly impotence of Udyandeva who too fled the valley in the face of the attack by another invader, Dulcha. The Rani however, remained at the helm and finally succeeded in evading the invader, but only with the help of her arch rival, Shah Mir. Though Udyandeva was recalled thereafter and remained on the throne for another decade or so, it was a figurative headship with real power in the hands of the Rani and Shah Mir waiting in the wings.

That wait came to an end when Udyandeva died. Kota Rani tried to keep Udyandeva's death a secret but that didn't help. Within days Shah Mir grabbed power and the tottering Hindu rule came to an end. When Shah Mir finally usurped power and came to be the king by the 4th decade of the 14th century, Lal Ded would have been around 32 years of age. She would have seen most of the strife and grown with it. She would also have been quite mature as a poet and, of course, acquired a keen sense of observation and understanding. Shah Mir died within a few years of his ascension to the throne and the subsequent bloody duel between his sons Jamshed and Ali Sher ended with the latter dethroning his brother and assuming kingship under the title Alla-ud-din. That happened in 1347 AD when Lal would have been advancing towards her middle age. It is said at that time she had become famous.[9] Traditions say that she travelled much and roamed from place to place. History also tells us that great upheavals were taking place at that time. The change at the helm was forcing changes on the society. Nobles and chieftains who had entered into marital relationship with the Shahmiris were discovering that it was not that simple after all and that this relationship was proving to be their undoing.[10] The local chieftains who had supported Shah Mir in his usurpation of power were not reaping its fruits but paying the costs of their naivety[11] as there was turmoil, killings and the shuffling of positions of power. There must also have been further influx of people from the northern areas of kinsmen and sympathisers of the Shah Mir dynasty and of other people too.

It was about this time when, as Jonaraja[12] relates, King Alla-ud-din's son Shihab-ud-din must have had his meeting with the "chief of *yoginis*". Later, much later, historians of Kashmir maintain that this chief Yogini could have been Lal Ded.[13] Since Jonaraja is not specific, a cloud of doubt has always hovered over this two-century late identification. However, it tells a couple of things about Lal which somehow have not been reckoned in the details that we have of Lal Ded's life, most of them being filled with profuse mythical elements. This shows that even at that time, the *Yogini*'s identification was assumed to be that of Lal, popular memory about her was that of a saint of much eminence who lived in a cloister with a band of *Shiva yogini*s. That her concern with the kingship had not altogether ceased. And, what is very significant as for her age is that she was elderly enough to be the chief of the yoginis.

Then Shihab-ud-din came to rule. His reign extended to 21 years and before its end Lal Ded died. Shihab-ud-din was a warrior king who led foreign expeditions. He has been compared to the great general Lalitaditya who had led similar but more extensive expeditions deep into the subcontinent as well as Central Asia in 9th century AD. But communal strife appears to have intensified as the Muslim rule got consolidated and more foreigners are presumed to have poured into Kashmir Valley. Compared to the border defence described by Alberuni two centuries earlier, the next Muslim historian of Kashmir

Sayid Ali writing of this era speaks of a continuous and easy influx as if no border barriers existed. The king himself had become a zealot. The *Baharistan-i-Shahi* records that on his return from his military expeditions, Shihab-ud-din took to ravaging Hindu temples and destroyed a number of them at Bijbihara and that "he had designs to destroy all the temples and put an end to the entire community of infidels."[14] Hasan corroborates this fact.[15] Though histories speak of the destruction, they rarely speak of their impact on the psyche and situation of the local population. People like Lal Ded would have experienced it firsthand – both the physical destruction and the mental torture inflicted.

Instead, a strange reverse twist has been given to the life of Lal Ded. It has been contended that Lal was a severe critic of "the old ways". This seems to imply that the wholesale destruction taking place all around her would not have made any impact on her; that she would rather have welcomed it. That is a most unseemly twist not borne out by events anywhere else. Lal definitely criticised many of the prevalent customs and rituals of the people of her times. But so have most thinkers in all times. Even as Lal Ded was criticising some of the customs, she was also upholding and propagating the beliefs upon which the society and faith of her time was founded. Shaayak[16] calls Lal Ded 'Mansuur-al-Haj's sister'. Four centuries prior to Lal Ded, Mansur had criticised Islam and Muslims rather vehemently. Baba Ali, the first hagiographer to speak of Lal Ded, calls her "the second Rabia of Basra." Rabia too, had criticised the mainstream Islam in rather very harsh terms. Around the time Lal Ded lived, Sufi saints all over the *Ummat-i-Islam* were criticising some Muslim customs and practices even more harshly. Lal Ded's criticisms do not imply that she was unaffected by the social upheavals taking place all around her. It is actually the true adherents of a faith who are vexed by deviations among their fellowmen. A sensitive soul, a poet and one with a deep connect with her land, belief and people, Lal Ded could not have been indifferent to the depredations, the demolitions of places of worship, the inveiglements to delude the society that were taking place throughout her land. The poet in her could not have remained untouched by all this. Indeed, given the times, especially the hard persecutions that followed after her, it is also possible that all that she may have uttered in anguish over it has not reached us. Yet, her extant *vaakh*s verily speak of the imprint of the times upon them. However, this is one aspect of her poetry that has remained unexplored.

A much-told incident of Zain-ul-Abdin's life is that when he developed a very painful sore or carbuncle that racked his body, he could not find a physician in the whole of Kashmir who could cure it as his zealous forbears had driven all physicians or *vaids* – as also all other competent professionals out of Kashmir. At long last, after much search, his men located a *vaid* named Shriya Bhat living in disguise in Srinagar and it was he who cured the king. When offered a reward, all that Shriya Bhat asked was a royal reprieve for members of his community to enable them to return to their homes. The

social dispossession of the local Kashmiris not ready to profess the new faith at the hands of zealots could cause them to lose even their livelihood. Speaking in the crucial century Lal laments in one of her *vaakhs*:[17]

Gatulah akh vuchhum bochhi sity maran
Pan zan haran pohi' ni vaavi' li'ye
Neshi bod akh vuchhum vaazus maran
Tani' Lal chhas praraan tshyenyem na prah

[A wise man I saw dying of hunger
Shaking like a leaf in the winter wind
(And) a fool I saw beating his cook
Since then I have been waiting for my bonds to break.
(waiting for death to relieve me!)]

Did Lal Ded see what finally came to be extreme persecution decades later? The last line of the *vaakh "Tani' Lal chhas praran tshyenyam na prah"* has somehow led to the reality of the preceding lines getting blurred and the whole *vaakh* transposed to a philosophical plane. But is it really so? The philosophical dimension is clearly far-fetched in this *vaakh* related to a rather mundane situation. All the preceding three lines speak of an actual, physical torment brought about by total flux of a society's mores and moorings. A proper understanding of the *vaakh* will easily show that the reference is to the zealots fattening and the learned starving for their faith because of the religio-political cataclysm having overtaken them.

Tali' chhuyi zyus tai pethi' chhukh natsan
Vanti' mali man kithi' patsan chhuy
Soruy sombrith yeii chhuy motsan
Vanti' mali an kithi' rotsan chhuy

There is a yawning pit underneath you
And you are dancing above it
Pray, Sir, how can you bring yourself to do so?
Look, the riches you are amassing here,
Nothing of this will go with you
Pray, Sir, how can you relish your food and drink?[18]

Lal's *vaakhs* have traditionally been interpreted as dealing with spiritual intimations and ascent. Along the way, she is shown telling the seeker that all the worldly play is but an act that has neither a sound basis and nor any lasting import. Recently, there has been an attempt to give a 'scientific' interpretation to them. It stretches from anticipation in

Lal's *vaakhs* of Harvey's discovery of blood circulation (which was still two centuries in coming), knowledge of the elemental composition of blood cells, e.g., iron in red blood cells (which was still farther to come) on to the intimations of the 20th century Einstein's theory of relativity and splitting of the atom.[19] All these, it is posited, are present in her *vaakhs* but no political content is ever talked of. Similarly, psychoanalytic explanations of Lal *Vaakh* have been offered drawing heavily on Freudian constructs, even though the modern psychoanalysts themselves do not treat Freud with much faith.

Practically no attempt has been made to situate Laleshwari in the uncertainty and looming dangers of her own age and time. She grew up with chaos growing all around. Her adult life passed at a time of heightened strife and conflict and ominous religio-political happenings. When Lal Ded was passing through the stage of that fabled *vairagya* of hers, Kashmir was passing into Mohammedan hands. There was lawlessness around her when Shah Mir passed away and his sons began a wrangle for the throne in the characteristic way. This was a great turmoil in which the roots of Kashmir's 5000-year old history and culture were under constant threat of being upturned. As is common in such situations, the legatees of heritages rarely fathom the depths into which they are soon to be thrown. But the seers see it all. Now see what Lal says:

Tali' chuyi zyus tai petthi' chukh natsaan
Vanti' maali man kithi' patsaan chhuy

[A deep pit lies beneath and you dance above it
Say how can you bear it with nonchalance?]

If she had been wandering all around as she is reputed to have been, she would have seen the chaos in its precipitate shape. Even without it, her insight would have shown her the vacuity, the fluidity, the looming dangers that lay everywhere. Of course, her spiritual quest does never leave her and she brings in the impermanence of the worldly life again and again:

Soruy sombrith yeti chhuy motsan
[All you gather is left behind ..... etc.]

History does not indicate that there was among the people of this tumultuous age any proper cognition of the changes that were imminent. And Lal Ded was no Joan of Arc, out to oust the foreign incursion, though one eminent writer[20] has tried to draw a close parallel between these two great women who were almost contemporaries across three thousand miles. Joan was the initiate who derived her military zeal from her spiritual intimations. The situation of Kashmir in 14th century AD was no better than France of early 15th century. France, however, had the long experience (mission) of having resisted

Muslim incursions from the Arab-Spain as well as Muslim-Turkey. There the paths were well delineated. It was almost natural that a Joan of Arc should lead a crusade against the foreigners intruding upon the holy soil of her land. And she had a native prince to goad her in the good work.

In Lal Ded's Kashmir, the kingship had already been usurped. All she could do was to try to drum some sense into her compatriots who, as the later events show, were slow, much too slow, to cognize the dangers. The Indian ethos, too, does not show any obvious prescience of similar occurrences and incursions. Two centuries later, it was a minor prince in Rajasthan who succours a harassed, harangued and hunted Humayun, paving the way for the grand Mughal empire in India.

Tali' chuyi zyus – 'a pit lies beneath' – could well have been addressed by Lal to her contemporaries who might have been gloating over being appointed to serve the new rulers. As Shahmir's sons Ali Sher and Jamshed were fighting it out over succession, people may have thought that things were no different from the chaos following Ramachandra's death. They were clearly unaware of the bulldozing of the entire Kashmiri antiquity that was to come at the hands of the grandson to come – Sikandar – and the zealous Sayids in thirty years' time. Meanwhile, they danced at the rise and fall, caught at the stray favours, and probably shrank at the general chaos but took no note of the developments that were taking place all around them.

The general chaos, the lawlessness and the political vacuum that the adventurous Rinchana and Shah Mir found on entering the vale of Kashmir finds almost a graphic depiction in the Lal's *vaakhs*:

Hachivi harinji petsyuv kan gom....

Valour and military might, not to speak of the royal arsenal, prove of no avail as Rinchen's confederates steal into Ramachandra's fort at Lahara and their petty knives 'drink the honey-like blood of Ramachandra'.[21] A straw arrow to the wooden bow, it all proved to be *Hachivi haranji petsyuv kan*. And the Valley, the natural fort that it was reputed to be, turned out to be "a shop without lock in the open market" (*manz bag baziras kulfi' ros van gom*).

Dreams or no dreams, none could have foreseen that Lalitadaya's Kashmir, Harsha's Kashmir, from which Ghaznavi chose to just pass by, would be gotten by the aliens on a platter. Yet here was the kingship laid on the lap of Shah Mir with just a token fight in which Kota Rani could just manage to kill herself instead of being bodily abused by the victor Shah Mir, if one goes by the sympathetic version; the other version being that Kota was ravished by Shah Mir for one night and imprisoned the following day.[22] All this happened because Kashmir had an 'unskilled carpenter' for a king in Udyandeva:

Abak chhan pyom yath razdane (An unskilled carpenter[23] I had for building this capital!)

Alberuni insists that Kashmir cannot be penetrated and here two adventurists not only gained entry but even favour and influence, that too because a bunch of inept rulers was at the helm. Sahadeva, Ramachandra, Udayandeva, and ultimately Kota Rani too, proved greatly unequal to the responsibility they held, not because of the enormity of the challenge but because of their own ineptitude. *Abakh chhans* all, they leave the grand realm to ruination.

Resentment against this could not have been small, though it does not appear to have been channelized properly. There come invaders one after the other, interested only in looting, plundering and laying the place waste for anybody to lord over. How the body of the state was racked and ruined by these catastrophes is described by Jonaraja – 'Father could not see son'[24] ... etc.

Tirthi' ros pan gom kus mali zane? (Un-cleansed my body has gone, But oh! Who knows?)[25]

The body of Kashmir had certainly gone un-cleansed. There was no one to help, no interventions there while the revellers ravaged it good. Dulcha and Achala took large numbers of Kashmiri people away with them. It is a different matter that they all perished in the snows on the way. They sapped Kashmir's strength and ultimately let Kashmir pass into the hands of the Shahmiris who took possession of it as if it was unprotected, unescorted, unguarded :

Hachivi harinji petsyuv kan gom

It is nobody's case that Lal Ded was leading a socio-political resistance against the bulldozing of ancient ways that was happening before her eyes. Verily her quest was a spiritual one. Many people experience a surge of spiritual feelings in time of despondency as a way of escape from dismay and helplessness. Thus, the Muslim world in Baghdad *Khilafat*, is said to have undergone a huge upsurge of Sufism after Baghdad was sacked by Halaku Khan. How ironic that the Sayids who knew of the dissipation of the Muslim rule under later day *Khalifa*s and had actually been hounded out of Central Asia by Timur should present its remnants as a "pristine high coming to shine the whole of the vale and India."[26]

Lal Ded lived at a time when the foundations of Kashmiri culture were being razed for good. Lal is shown as a saint greatly impressed by the incoming 'Sufis', when what we find in her *vaakh*s is *swadharma* and *paradharma* – the love of one's own faith as against the faith of the others – *parmas,* as she calls it, feeling intoxicated by another's wine, the lure of the alien way of life, deluding decisions. All these would have been common sight for her to see. The tortures and tribulations of her time were precipitate

and were concrete facts witnessed by her own eyes. These words of hers tell how anguished she was by the turmoil and transition her land was undergoing and how she was stirring people against the happenings. Even while relating her spiritual experiences, the images of what she saw silently crept in, providing apt similes and metaphors:

Ha tseta kavi' chuy logmut parmas
Kavi' goy apzis pazyuk bront
Neshi' boz vash kornakh pardarmas
Yini' gatshinas' zyani' marnas kront

[Why are you lured by the alien way?
Why have you mistaken falsehood for the truth?
Ignorance has brought you under the spell of the alien way…
(And) made you resigned to (considerations of) coming and going, life and death.]

If not broadcasting a pithy message to prevent the capitulation to an alien way (*pardharmas*), Lal Ded is certainly using the situation of her day to expound her experience. It is possible that she is using this terminology which comes to her easily; it could as well be that she is trying to array forces against it in her own way. Somehow this crusader's attempts and tribulations, have not been analysed. May be part of the reason lies in the deep spiritualism of her verses. As Lal Ded grew, she saw the refugees becoming masters, and the masters being subjugated. The travails of Kota Rani from being the 'luminous flame of Ramachandra's house-hold' to wifehood to adventurer Rinchen, and the coward Udyandeva successively; her passage from being a mentor to Shah Mir, to becoming his associate and finally seeing him as the master who cast her off after use: all present very sharp contrasts. Note what Lal Ded says in the following verse:

Da'mi dithi'm ga'j dazi'vu'ni –
Da'mi dyuuthum di'h na ti' nar –
Da'mi dithi'm Panddav ma'ji –
Da'mii ddiitthi'm, kraa'jii mas.

[One moment I saw the hearth blazing with fire,
And the next moment I saw neither the smoke nor fire,
One moment I saw the mother of the Pandvas,
And the next moment I saw her as the potter aunt.]

All this is about the transience of time, of course. But at one level only. The contrasts from the immediate physical world, which Lal is presenting here, are much significant to be dismissed casually. Indeed, the compulsions of the time, the swift turn of fortunes, the allurements that sweep people off their feet, the overturning of values and ideals – are

all reflected in the images we find in the *vaakh*. Similarly, the line *kyah bodukh mohi' bavi' sa'dras* (Look how you are immersed in the sea of delusion) of another *vakh* is a pretty common and an often used metaphor, but the next line makes one almost sit up:

Soth luhrity peyi tami' pa'nkh

[Having destroyed the embankment (of ideals, values, dharma),
you have mired yourself in *tamas*.]

Coming after "having destroyed the embankment" (*soth luhrith*) the expression "*tamic pa'nkh*" is as explicit a hint about religious conversion as possible. New allurements are offered, people fall for them breaking away from the established order to which they earlier belonged, and settle for material comforts and gains that conversion brings – all this points to the hard realities of the contemporary situation. One doesn't know if Lal went around trying to stem this deluge. Frankly, no one today knows anything about Lal Ded, one way or the other. But the deluge was all around her and the decimations too were taking place everywhere. Unknown to Lal Ded and just a dozen miles away from her home (in-law's house), Nund Rishi's ancestors were getting converted, at this very time:

Yami bath kari'nai ka'ly chori' dare
Kavi' zan kasi mari' ni'ny shenkh

[Yama's messengers will drag you away bleeding on the appointed time
What (change, means) will free you from death's shadow?]

People were getting converted through threats and allurements, here and there. To the common man there hardly appeared any future in firmly adhering to the traditions–*kyah ma'nith yeti s'thir asun* (What use is being firm here?). Utter chaos prevails. Those who have switched over to the new faith are having a gala time.

Just as political leanings can hardly be free from religious beliefs; social life is never all too distant from spiritual quest. In fact, many mystical urges are rooted in social contexts. The fluid times, the breaking of bonds, shifting of loyalties and the boat of faith capsizing all over – none of these could fail to leave their impress upon Lal Ded's poetry. All this, in a way, had brought forth to her the impermanence of life and fickleness of fortune in a most alarming manner. And to what extent! With her firm belief in *nirguna Shiva*, the precipitate ideations of the new faith could not have failed to tell upon her mind – affecting her thought, cognition and understanding. This consequently showed in all her verses, even though she was but a mystic and not a crusader:

Nabi'dy, baras ati' gand dyol gom
Deh kan hol gom hyaki' kahyo
Gvari' sund vanun ravan tyol pyom
Pahali ros khyol gom hyaki' kahyo

[The shoulder knot of my load of sugar candy has become loose
My upright body has double under, how can I cope
My guru's word has accentuated this loss – brought the pinching loss into focus
My flock is left without a shepherd, how can I cope?]

Lal Ded is definitely speaking at a much higher level than any superficial reading can render. She is talking of finer controls of body and senses which have gone awry in absence of a directing control, the result being that the senses and urges as well as impulses are pulling in different directions. Yet the contemporaneity of the images is easily apparent. The sweet load has become a burden because one tightening string has become unknotted. Think of King Sahadeva running away from the fight and Ramachandra, who could have strengthened his power, burdened and heaving under strain. The resultant loss becomes evident as the people having lost the guiding authority became a directionless flock, vulnerable, weak. *Pahali ros khyol* (a flock without a shepherd) is what Kashmir was in the middle of the first half of 14th century.

A single yet singular image of the ensuing divisiveness occurs in one of her famous *vaakhs* that has become a proverbial expression of disunity and the loss it entails:

kyah kari' pa'ntsan da'han ti' kahan.
Vokhshun yath leji yim ka'rith ga'y
Sa'ri sami'han yath razi lami'han.....
Adi' kyaazi ravihe kahan gav...

[The five, ten and eleven.– what will I do with them?
They have scrapped this pot through!
If all had united and pulled this one rope
Would the eleven then have lost their cow?]

This is obviously a reference to the five *bhutas* or elements and *indriyas* or sense organs and the controlling mind going astray in a situation of loss of focus. But what have references to lack of unity (*sa'ri sami'han* – if all had united) and purpose (*yath razi lami'han* – and pulled this one rope) and the loss caused thereby, to do in a verse about *sadhana* and *tattvabodha*? An interesting point to note here is that this interpretation of the *vaakh* in terms of *indriyas* and their *ekagrata* (uniting them) is more in keeping with the *Advaita* of Shankaracharaya. The *Advaita* taught by Kashmir Shaivism looks at it

rather differently. In the former, the effort of the *indriyas* and the significance of *bhutas* is conceived in terms of a unison of effort to overthrow the *avidya* which is the primary cause of the descent and ascent to Brahman, while in Shaivism the stress is on transcending the *tattvas* successively – *kramena*, as it calls the process – to higher stages by the experient for the ultimate realisation of the One, i.e., Paramashiva. Nothing is overthrown here, for everything including *Maya* is a part of the Essence in Kashmir Shaivism.[27] Surely, unity of purpose and effort are needed in the way to self-realization also, but such graphical imagery does not seem to pertain to it. Besides, the graphic images that we have in the *vaakh* can be de-contextualized only with difficulty. Incidentally, this *vaakh*, particularly its last two lines, are frequently used by Kashmiris in the context of disunity among people and its consequences.

Whatever the converted may have felt in the succeeding times, the new order and switch-over to new practices, say like eating beef (*gomamsa*) would have been awfully traumatizing for a people who could never even think of such a thing. Cow slaughter or *gohatya* in that age (as, indeed, now also) was considered equivalent to slaying a Brahman – a sin for which there was no expiation. The expression regarding the 'eleven' losing the 'cow' may just be a poetic metaphor, but considering the choice of words that Lal Ded invariably makes it can not be just a concession to rhyme or meter.

For, here we have a people who refuse to admit a reigning king into their faith simply because he is not considered qualified for it due to his behaviour or ways or any other circumstances. The refusal of Devasvamin to Rinchen's request to initiate him into his faith may have been impolitic. It must have been hugely disadvantageous – politically, financially and personally – to the priestly clan to which he belonged. This was indeed a forceful effort to preserve the sanctity of the Shaiva cult and its traditions and beliefs. Its adherents who refused to succumb to the wishes of the highest authority of the land cannot be presumed to have easily forsaken their ways, their moorings, their *dharma*. They could certainly not have been very happy about the drastic changes in their mode of living which were forced upon them just a decade and half later.

The people – helpless and vanquished – could not have failed to ponder over and analyze the tremendous loss that they had suffered. Lal Ded, as a sensitive thinker who talked about the people in *vaakh* after *vaakh*, talked to them, advised them and guided them constantly could not have remained untouched by the sweeping changes that were taking place. Her verses give us ample evidence of her awareness of what was going on. It can be discerned as much in her clear articulation of things as in her choice of words which can be interpreted at several levels. Even when a verse appears to carry mystical intimations, its links to the reality around remain apparent:

Raza' hams a'sith sapdukh koluy
Kustam tsoluy kyah tam hyath
Grati' gav band tai gratan hyot goluy
Grati' vol tsoluy phal phol hyath

[Even though you are a swan you have become dumbfounded,
Somebody has decamped with something of yours
The mill stopped and its channel got choked,
The miller has fled with all your grain.]

Though some of the metaphors used here would appear to be quite apt from the point of view of dualist school, they do not go with the non-dualist monism of Kashmir Shaivism which is the *sine quo non* of Lal's poetry – *vuchhim Shiv Shakht milith ti' vah!* Seen from the angle of the schools of Kashmir Shaivism of which Lal Ded is a clear exponent, the metaphors would look rather imprecise. A *Shivayogini* well versed in the lore would not have forgotten Shaivism's basic theme of the ultimate oneness of consciousness and indulged in inappropriate expressions. But that is if she were only expounding the Shaivite philosophy. Suppose she was alluding to other things like, say, the dispossessions being perpetrated all around her, the ethics getting subverted, the system getting choked, the people losing their moorings. Or, suppose she perceived potential threats which people at large could not recognize. A related point is, how much the notion (or misconception) that Lal Ded uttered nothing but philosophical ideas has affected the verbal form in which her verses have reached us orally or through the rendering of the scribe, which could otherwise have been different?

In any case, the imagery could not have been impinged upon; the metaphors would not be difficult to look for. They are there in abundance and slip into her words, her expressions and become a subliminal concern even when she is articulating spiritual truths. Even though Lal is no crusader, even though the change in the political set up of her times is not her primary concern, she could not have remained unaffected by the situation she was placed in. She could not have ignored the turmoil troubling her fellow countrymen or become impervious to the happenings around her, their causes, the effects that flowed from them. They get reflected in her poetry and profusely so.

Here it is important not to get distracted by the spiritual content and allusions of Lal Ded's poetry. There is no questioning the primary fact that this great woman was a *Shivayogini*. The association of the vague tale about Shihab-ud-din's encounter with a *yogini* as told by Jonaraja with Lalleshvari by Baba Ali two centuries after her death may not indicate that the *yogini* was actually Lal, but it provides ample evidence of the fact that folklore identified her even then as a *Shivayogini*. We have Sufi poets or Christian poets all talking deeply of religion, yet their non-religious messages are heard sans bias.

There are yet others who, for reasons unknown, are trying to paint this great Yogini as a later day communist crusader up in the arms against traditions. This is an attempt to distort history by personal perceptions. One may differ in our perceptions of Lalleshvari's poetry and personality, but there is no room for differences about the actual history of her times or her real persona.

It may also be noted that she could not but speak in the terminology and conceptual paradigms of her age. Her language and her concerns were no doubt spiritual but every creative soul worth his salt has been known to give expression to the realities of the times he belongs to. There is nothing wrong if we interpret such poetry at different levels, for nobody knows the actual mind of the poet. He/she could be talking of mundane things or communicating transcendental truths. Taking the example of Sufi poets, their poetry is relished both for the mundane as well as sublime feelings. Indeed, any poetry lends itself to manifold interpretations and with the poet not being around to reveal the intended meaning – some critics would not even grant a poet that privilege – there is enough space as well as the need to situate a poet in the perspective provided by his time. Any insistence on totally dissociating Lal Ded from the political milieu of her times may not be true to the poetess herself. It takes the spirit away granting instead an exalted spirituality. Yet that spirituality could only be the product of the age in which she lived, and its commotions and turmoil. Nobody can deny that Lalleshvari's poetry can have political connotations as well, for she did live in a most turbulent time. There is actually need for looking at her poetry as a source of the history of that time, of which we have no actual record. But that may not be taken to imply that politics is the primary concern of her poetry. That place belonged to her faith, belief and insights therein. Yet, as Rashiid Raashid writes in the journal of the Kashmiri Department of University of Kashmir, "Leaving the philosophical aspects of Lal's poetry aside, it is important to explore the political background and the resultant dimensions it gave to Lal's poetry".[28] This paper attempts that in a modest way and hopes to pave way for more in-depth exploration of this important aspect of Lal's life and poetry.

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CHAPTER 15

The Mystic and the Romantic

Two Kashmiri Women Poets – Rupa Bhavani and Arnimal

Neerja Mattoo

Women in Kashmir have always been articulate, expressing themselves in graphic language laced with a wealth of figures of speech and turns of phrase that come naturally, almost effortlessly to their tongues. Even in conversations about the day-to-day subjects, they display a talent for the apt word and even produce a rhyming analogy! This linguistic felicity perhaps, comes from their collective racial memory, loaded as it is with the *vaakhs* and the *vatsans* of Kashmiri women poets from the past. Weddings or other community celebrations like Havans see them at their creative best, when they sing the songs, *(vatsans)* composed by Habba Khatoon and Arnimal or the mystic verses (*vaakhs*) of Lal Ded and Rupa Bhavani, poets who are a major part of our literary heritage. It is these singing voices that have preserved their poetry through centuries of darkness when the written word was the monopoly of a few scholars who did not share their knowledge with the masses. This paper focuses on two Kashmiri Pandit poetess who represent the two major streams of Kashmiri poetry, the mystic and the romantic, Rupa Bhavani of seventeenth century and Arnimal of the eighteenth. Though the two of them had two great precursors in the two genres – Lal Ded and Habba Khatoon – the sophistication of thought and feeling that they contributed to the streams enriched Kashmiri poetry.

Rupa Bhavani

The facts of Rupa Bhavani's life are well documented and though myths might have grown around her, as she was a venerated mystic saint [her father's family went to the extent of believing her to be an incarnation of the goddess Sharika (Bhavani) and attributed several miracles to her], they are broadly true, as her father and her band of devotees, set them down meticulously. To her clan she is know as Alakheswari, perhaps because of her long locks of hair which she wore like Sadhus, or as Alakh Sahiba (the Invisible One) or simply Saheb (the Lord). She was born in 1625 AD in the family of Madhava Dhar at Safakadal, Srinagar. From her very childhood to the end of her long life – she died in 1721, she is said to have shown an inclination for the other worldly. Though married at the age of seven, which was the prevalent practice in the cultural pattern she belonged to, she renounced the householder's way of life, and left home. Wandering from one secluded place to another, she practiced great penance, and went into long periods of meditation, like Buddha, in search of spiritual awakening and salvation. Having at last found, through profound yogic *sadhana* and an inward–looking eye, the secret of equipoise, she communicated her experience of a cosmic consciousness to her devoted band of devotees and followers, in poetic utterances. These were carefully recorded and thus are preserved for posterity. It is remarkable that a father, who had followed custom in performing a "child marriage", should welcome his daughter back into his home after she calmly announces that it is not possible for her to continue to live with her husband and his family because they show no sensitivity to her "differentness". In the beginning of the seventeenth century, here is a woman who asks for and, what is more, gets "a room of her own". Not only does she refuse to follow a woman's common fate at that time, that of quiet submission to the norms set down by society, but dares to break free and chart a course of her own. No doubt her father's courage in supporting her decision and making it possible for her to pursue an alternative way of life had a lot to do with his own spiritual orientation and the certainty of his belief in her divinity. He was the first to acknowledge her Sainthood and established the practice of her being venerated as a saint. A temple and shrines were built in the places she spent time in. Even western educated members of the Dhar clan she belonged to, make an offering of sugar candy at her shrine twice a year and fast on her death-anniversary. Whichever family a Dhar girl goes into after her marriage, also carries on with the practice. The result is that today most Kashmiri Pandit families have come under Rupa Bhavani's sphere of influence believing that she was a saint endowed with great spiritual power. It is said that in the beginning, the other members of her father's family would ridicule him, and deliberately cook a stew of sheep's hooves in the kitchen, so that the strong, coarse smell and flavour of the non-vegetarian dish, which took a long time to cook, would permeate the air of meditation

and *puja* in the house. But Madhava Dhar and his daughter refused to be provoked by such needling and Rupa Bhavani's patience became as legendary as Lal Ded's. Like Lal Ded, she too writes mystic poetry, describing her quest for the divine and the outcome of her yogic practices. But the language she uses does not have the simplicity of Lal Ded's Kashmiri. It is interesting to note that the latter's language, though so much older, is much more accessible to the present day reader than the former's. Perhaps the reason may be that during the intervening three centuries Kashmir had witnessed sweeping historical and cultural changes and consequently become a linguistic melting-pot, absorbing words from the north, including Iran and Central Asia as well as from the south. Rupa Bhavani's Brahmin ancestors are believed to have returned to Kashmir from the Deccan, where they had taken refuge from religious persecution, only a couple of generations before she was born. In her poetry, therefore, the influence of Sanskrit, the language of religion and intellectual discourse, is much more visible. It seems that Lal Ded deliberately broke free from the Brahmanical straitjackets of accepted norms, linguistic as well as social and religious, and chose to identify herself with the mass of people. Even when talking of the subtlest mystic experience, she speaks to them in their voice. But Rupa Bhavani, on the other hand, is quite often obscure. It seems that she addresses the initiated, to whom her references and ellipses would have been comprehensible. But a little effort in unraveling her *vaakhs* can be highly rewarding, giving one pleasure in the words as well as wisdom in their import.

Her main work is the *Rahasyopadesha*, a collection of one hundred and forty fix stanzas in the form of *vaakhs*, a purely Kashmiri verse form in which the mystical and didactic poetry of Lal Ded was written in the fourteenth century. It consists of four lines each a trochaic tetrameter, and does not adhere to a strict rhyme scheme. In fact more often than not, there is no rhyme, but a solemn rhythm, a certain dignity of movement which suits the generally grave tone of religious poetry. Of course such poetry is often ecstatic too and we find Rupa Bhavani varying rhythms to suit mystic outbursts of an ecstatic state of mind.

She begins the main part of *Rahasyopadesha,* with the acknowledgement that her father is among her first Gurus.

Om gwar antar tseth nirmalam
Shuddham atyant vidyadharan
Lal naam lal parma gwaram
Shiva Madhav naham parmam Braham soham

(I begin with the sacred sound and symbol, "Om". Having installed the pure and greatly learned Guru in the form of Lal Ded and Madhava, in a heart and mind purified. I realize that I am reduced to nothing in myself, but become a Supreme Self, a part of Brahma Himself.)

Here is a metaphysical conceit in the manner of the English poet John Donne – one is nothing and everything at the same time, which might sound absurd at first sight, but a closer look reveals that that is exactly what happens in a mystic experience of merger with the Supreme Reality.

Veneration of the Guru is a very important concern of hers. The Guru is necessary not only to initiate her into the world of knowledge, but his hand is needed to guide at every step of the arduous spiritual journey, to discipline an otherwise straying mind and keep it on the track of the mystical quest.

Generally mystic or ecstatic song has been one of the forms used by women to protest the strictures and conventions of patriarchy. Mirn, Christina Rossetti, Rabia – all provide such instances, but here Rupa Bhavani not only accepts patriarchy but even extols it, which is a comment upon the tightly-knit Kashmiri Pandit society of the time, where louder protest was not imaginable. Perhaps this is what had something to do with the father in turn doing all he could to support her when she did break free.

A close look at the *vaakhs* reveals that her main preoccupation is with primal philosophical questions: the purpose of Life and how to bring about a harmonious relationship among the constituents of an individual personality – body, mind, emotion and soul. She talks about how one can break free from the limitations of the body while working towards spiritual evolution and how a tranquility of mind, while engaged in the quest for the Eternal Truth, can be brought about. The detailed description of her own yogic practices and the experience of a rare ecstatic state brought about by an awakened *kundalini*, in which the burden of the material world seems to fall off and becoming pure spirit, the goal of merger with the Absolute Reality is achieved, are some of the main concerns of her work. The concept of *shunya,* (the state of Nothingness or the idea of the great Void) is mentioned again and again in the spirit of the *Sufi* who asks for nothing but the total annihilation of Self. The following verse, richly metaphorical, illustrates:-

Gwarith Sumarith shunya khadum
Parud Morum favay suti
Pantsa agna lal chadovum
Gwash prazuhum tavai.suti

(Deep search and thought achieved this state of nothingness, that is how I stilled the mercurial mind, Five kinds of sacrificial fires were lit, That is what brought about Radiant Light)

The motif of "radiant light", is a recurring one in all mystic poetry, whether in the East or the West. As the opposite of "darkness, it is the final dispeller of doubt and a revelation of Truth, which is said to be dazzling in nature. In Rupa Bhavani's work too

we find a similar ardent wish to still the restless, doubting mind, rip up the veil of ignorance and see the "Light". She wants to shed the burden of the gross reality behind which the inner spirit is hidden, and thus find self-realization.

Being a record of the highly advanced mystic practices and experiences of an extremely evolved spirit, her *vaakhs* have remained inaccessible to the ordinary reader. Due to the esoteric, subtle nature of her experiences, her poetic work is often enigmatic. There is nothing like an instantaneous rapport – profound though, combined with intense feeling, makes her verse obscure to the generally less sophisticated reader, who, not being on the same mystical plane, finds it difficult to unravel the densely packed meaning. This is the main reason why her poetry has never been "popular." Unlike most Kashmiri poetry, her *vaakhs* have never been sung, nor set to music to become part of a professional singer's repertoire, which was mainly responsible for the preservation of Kashmiri poems in an oral tradition. They are the province of the "initiated", the verses being generally recited only at gatherings of her followers at special occasions like a *havan* at her death-anniversary. Even those who have taken up a serious study in the past, have added to the obscurity by interpreting the meaning according to their own particular philosophy. That the language used is a mixture of old Kashmiri, Sanskrit and Persian, makes the task even more difficult. To her followers and devotees, however, her words are precious gems, cherished till this day due to the aura of Sainthood that surrounds her. A lay person is struck by the sheer force and weight of her argument, often presented through use of the device of the "metaphysical conceit". An analysis of her poetry can, therefore, be both a challenge and a delight.

The *vaakhs* reveal a personality very well-versed in the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, Vedanta and the most advanced Hindu philosophical though. She talks of the concept of non-duality as one who has felt the presence of the Universal Spirit residing within her own self, displaying a rare confidence in prescribing the right path to her listeners. Here is an example:

Kripa to karoon yus panay zane
Manuye mane din tay rath
Sarvaroop dhyana yus parzane
Mane mani ta nanyas zath

(The one who knows within oneself the Cause and the Grace, Knows that Day and Night exist in the mind itself, To one who knows the Multi-faceted One through meditation, The meaning is clear. Mind itself knows the nature of the Self.)

The word *zath* in the last line demands attention for a number of reasons. For one

thing it can mean several things in Kashmiri: caste, species, breed, race, family, lineage, tribe or the true nature of something. The many connotations of the word suggest a wealth of meaning to the listener at once a reference to the hierarchical structure of the Kashmiri Pandit society where every person has a certain 'place' in which he or she has to be located. It is also interesting to note that she preserves her father's name even as she locates herself in the lineage of Lal Ded, as though to suggest her *zath* in so many senses of the word. The word packs into itself so much that makes sense in the richest manner to a mind born and bred in the Kashmiri socio-cultural tradition. Ironically enough it is ultimately the language of caste derived from the social pressure of the very Brahminism that Rupa Bhavani protests against in another *vaakh* (quoted later) that serves to communicate subversive thought. Though all mystics, whether from the Bhakti or Sufi school exhort the listener to rise above man-made distinctions even if only because they were made by man with limited knowledge who could not see the one spirit that resided in all, and therefore suspect, yet the language of man is indispensable.

Obviously, Rupa Bhavani must have been born in a culture steeped in religion, where Sanskrit, the language of the Hindu scriptures and Persian, the official language, were part of ordinary discourse. The ease with which words from both languages become a part of her poetic diction suggests the richness of her linguistic background. Born in a scholarly Brahmin family that had only a few generations back come to settle in Kashmir from South India, and considering its rich socio-religious-cultural background, it would seem that such a vocation and such scholarship would come easy, but it has to be noticed that she alone of her brothers and sisters received a spark that set her on a mystical journey uniquely her own. In fact a brother of hers is supposed to have been illiterate, even though as a son he must certainly have received his father's attentions as a teacher. The following is a good example of her linguistic virtuosity, where she shifts with ease from the Sanskritised Kashmiri to the Persianised:

Var diyi to buh varaye vasa
Bhumi pad game rasa rasa
Khasan to shabad shumun ahang
Sarang rag veena ta chyang

(If he should grant a boon, I would wed myself to my essence, My feet slowly treading the earth, I would rise in a resonance of the eternal sound and the music of the *sarang*, the *veena* and the *chang*.)

The word *varaye* means to wed and offers a perfect example of how even a person or poet who protests against certain social institutions through his or her action walking out of marriage in Rupa Bhavani's case – cannot be free from the power of existing vocabulary. It is the martial metaphor that she has to depend upon.

Bhumi (the earth) and *game* (walking) are pure Sanskrit, while *ahang* and *chang* are Persian words. This verse also indicates the richness of the culture where there is a familiarity with a wide variety of musical instruments the *sarang* of Kashmir, the *veena* of South India and the *chang* of Central Asia and the Middle East. The alliteration, the repetitive sibilants and the assonance point to a high skill in musicality. Though the thought here is not simple, it is fine poetry, which makes it accessible to a finely tuned temperament. The *vaakh* is an example of perfect fusion of thought and form, feeling and its expression, sound and meaning. The journey of the spirit, ascending through various levels of being to reach the final one of awareness of the Supreme, in fact reveals the divinity lying within ones own self. It is this truth that the *vaakh* so felicitously, so harmoniously reveals.

Rupa Bhavani's philosophy seems to lay stress not only on the concept of non-duality in the field of the spiritual, but even among human beings she advocates the radical concept of striving to rise above all external or man-made distinctions. That a mystic, devoted to the idea of finding salvation through individual effort and merit, should think of showing a way to the lesser privileged, is astonishing. That is what makes her not only a yogi, but a socially concerned human being, who is responsible for the removal of many social evils from Kashmiri Pandit society. She rejected ritual as mere form in religion.

Nav tara vav savara
Na rang na varn to na guthur
Bronh an nyenday pata kar varay
Kohanday dari to kas dare.

(Ferry the river with the wind as ferryman, Colorless, casteless, clan less. Weed your field and then do the rest, Who then the debtor and who creditor?)

Metaphors from farming and river transport, common sights in Kashmir, are used to explain the absurdity of set notions of superiority or otherwise of birth. When the Divine, who ferries us across the turbulent ocean of this world, has no colour, form or *gotra* (clan name), who are we to impose such distinctions on mere humans? One must remind oneself that these are words spoken in seventeenth century Kashmir, by a woman, who must have had unbounded courage and a rare strength of conviction to make such a radical statement against discrimination.

Yus mani heye dhyan to panas tole
Kunh na geli ta kunsi na gele
Zagi Haras to lagyas bele
Panay panas suti mele

(The one who meditates and consciously weighs oneself, Judges none and is judged not, Only waits for Him and His benediction, Such a one will fuse with the Eternal One)

Here is an earnest desire to surrender everything and achieve a state of supreme detachment where nothing matters except ones own estimation of oneself. Accountability is only to the "Eternal One". There is no "other here, just the spirit of the seeker and the sought. That an important sermon is delivered in such a condensed form, points to the high degree of poetic skill.

While describing the ecstasy of a mystic experience, Rupa Bhavani comes very close to the "find madness" of the Sufi dervish, using the metaphor of the *saqi* and her cups of intoxicating wine:

Deeh anand nada may
Lotsan piala mutsur
Saqay pilao hu-hu-ha
Bu baha ha-ha matwala

(The body in bliss, a river of wine! The cups of these eyes are open.
O Saqi, come and fill them to the brim, do!
Hoo Hoo Ha! I cry in ecstasy, a madness in my heart!)

This is another pointer to the liberal education she must have received, which apparently included lessons from Persian poetry. Hence her familiarity with Omar Khayyam (?-1123) and Hafiz (1320-89), who use the metaphor from the tavern so liberally in their mystic poetry. She is now placed in a constant state of bliss which has been attained after rigorous mystic practice. She has now reached the state to which Sufis aspire, therefore the terminology used is theirs. She uses similes from not only the Hindu mythology, but from normal day to day activities in order to convey thoughts and observations about the Transcendental. One finds a very well-worked out device of the Epic simile, using the process of making ghee (an essential commodity while performing a *yagya*), in the following two *vaakhs*:

Mandh samudar don sani
Chhavak samadh nad-bindu tsath
Dan akhand milayo makhan
Sadikaris drayom gev
Tav roop yagya hoomas karith
Ahut ditsas angan hunz
Jyot parzane karan chyane

(Churn the milk of the mind, your Self the churner, locate the Primal Point and Sound. Break it down with the power of meditation, Heat the butter of knowledge, spiritually empowered, you will find the ghee. With these ingredients, a *yagya* I perform, Offering the oblation of my own limbs. The flames that rise are your own effulgence. In them my essence revealed, I stand as myself, finally.)

There is a deep concern for realization of ones true identity, to find the center of one's Being and then to rise above it, but the heaviness of the mystical concern is lightened by the use of a purely domestic metaphor. The images connected with the process of churning also have other connotations to the Hindu, associated as they are with the churning of *Kshirsagar*, the childhood of Lord Krishna. All this adds more layers of meaning to the two *vaakhs*.

For the mystic poet the problem is to communicate something she alone has experienced, and which has at best a self-referentiality. To most readers it is impenetrable lying as it does outside their 'normal' experience. To make it comprehensible the only tools that are available are those of ordinary vocabulary, from which a word or phrase has to be found to explain the 'unexplainable', not an easy task by any means. A mystic would be quite content with the experience itself and happy to stay in that blissful state in silence, but as a poet she must speak and vocabulary can at best be a rhetorical approximation of a state of mind. For example, the phrase *antarmukhi drishti* occurs as a refrain at the end of a large number of her verses. Basically Sanskrit, the literal meaning of the phrase is, 'a sight that faces inwards'. The act of *sadhana* is supposed to actually begin with meditation, in which with eyes closed, one forgets everything that can be seen with the eyes. So what does one see? The images of the external world that rise to the mind? No, everything regarding objective reality has to be suspended. In its place there is contemplation of ones own self by ones own self without any external aids – a kind of self-communion in which normal 'drishti' (eye sight) has no role to play. What one may see now, if one is a mystic of stature, would be something that lies inside ones own self. That is the way in which seeing something that cannot be seen makes sense. Rupa Bhavani does not use the cliché, 'the eyes of the soul'. Being a poet, she uses the much more graphic, forceful phrase instead for such perception.

Draav vuphe vaav rupi gur
Gwar ishwar aav avinashi
Paan mashe ta dyaan toshe
Swaman parmaanand vaata that raashi

(The air-horse flew upwards, unrestrained, Till the Guru, like God Himself, Immutable, appeared, My body forgotten, in mediation was content,Intuitively I reached that blissful state destined for me!)

This is, of course, a loose translation, because many blanks need to be filled while understanding and critically appreciating this *vaakh*. While the image of the mind as an unbridled horse may not be a remarkable one in mystic poetry, placing the Self in a particular *rashi* (a sign of the zodiac) to ensure a blissful state of deeper awareness is certainly a novel image, jolting in its impact. Its unexpected touches like this lift some of her *vaakhs* to the level of great poetry. Here is another:

Kwah yud dazan veh heyi baaze
Bowy heyi ha hoo atsyes grakh
Kruh traave vwodes swabhave
Shehle tsandan-daare kraay.

(The one who bears the heat that burns, Feels the *hoo-ha-breath* and boils inwards, The dross burns away, the essence springs forth, The flaming cauldron is cooled under a shower of sandal!)

Obviously the *vaakh* explains the yogic practice of breath control known as *pranayam*. The intense discipline of such practice is supposed to lead to not only self-purification, but also the realization of Truth, every mystic's goal. The verse is a graphic description of this process, using metaphors from metallurgy and the kitchen, together.

There is a brooding intellectuality that characterizes Rupa Bhavani's poetry. Unlike most mystic poets who suggest an intuitive comprehension of the Unknown, she can only merge herself with it after she has analyzed the whole process of the exercise, going over all the steps one by one, pondering over what has been achieved and what remains. That is why her poetry needs an intellectual response as much as an emotional one. There is a sophistication of thought, a simultaneously inward, outward, even upward looking eye, with which our eyes and mind have to be synchronized in order to understand the full import of her poetry. But with a little effort, an appreciation of her poetry is possible even to the uninitiated mind. Its is necessary to draw her out of the confines of sainthood in order to realize that she was not only a mystic, but a talented poet, an extraordinary woman of courage, whose real place in the history of Kashmiri literature and thought, needs to be better researched and determined.

Arnimal

Arnimal was born in Palhalan, a village near Patan, in 1737 AD and passed away in 1778 AD. While still a child she was married to Bhavani Dass Kachru of Rainawari, Srinagar, who grew up to be a scholar of Farsi and won appreciation from the Afghan Governor in Kashmir. He is credited with the authorship of *Behr-i-Tabil* in Farsi. Later he even went to Kabul as an important functionary and became part of the Court elite and its

immoral ways, while Arnimal suffered the fate of a forsaken wife. With Arnimal (1737-78) we enter a world, which has nothing to do with other worldly. This poet of great romantic sensibility is concerned with the here and now. Hers is no doubt a quest too, but it is a quest for the embodied one, not of the spirit. It is pure passion, a longing for the earthly lover, in her case an absentee husband, whose rejection of her she cannot accept silently. Arnimal's work has not a few surprises for us. For one thing she lived at a time when Kashmiri society must have been under great strain living under the Afghan rule, where feudalism and patriarchy were in full vigour and the liberty of voicing ones feelings could hardly arise, even for the privileged. It is surprising, thereto find a woman, particularly one from a conservative Pandit family, doing so, uninhibitedly, in her poems. Here we see a woman who would not submit quietly to ill treatment in a patriarchal society, nor allow herself to be banished to the "attic as a madwoman" for not keeping her mouth shut. She protests against his cruel spurning, exposing his faithlessness in unsparing words. In the process we get to hear songs of great beauty, full of descriptions of Kashmir's wealth of flowers and plants which can be sung easily because of their musical quality and an innate rhythm. Here are a few of her songs in illustration:

Damaana bodum ashi mati
Kaamni praraan doh gom
Saamaana gandith aayas
Yoot kyah tse loguy nashi mati
Paaman laajithas kyah kara
Kaamni praraan doh gom

(My garment is soaked in tears O wild one! The days drag by while the love-sick waits. For you I came all decked up, Intoxicated with what, did you turn away? Spurned and scorned, a target for taunts, The days drag by while the love-sick waits.)

Kar lagan chain kadam myani aangana
Sheri hemtho valo!
Bwo draayas darda chaane parada tsatith, beyi yimo valo!
Heemal aayas, bala motsus poshitulay ho valo!

(My garden awaits your footfall, upon my head let your footprint fall, I'll wear the mark like a crown! In pain of separation, I tore my veil asunder, Won't you return to me, ever? A garland of jasmine I once was, Now shrunk to a mere petal! Won't you return to me, ever?)

In this song the words, 'I tore my veil asunder' are a bold admission that once her

husband has exposed her to ridicule through his rejection, there is no need for a so-called womanly coyness.

The sheer musicality of the following song, apart from its sensuous imagery, is delightful, even though the emotion is that of pain:

Goon goon mo kar ha yindro
Kanren pholilay malaayo
Rabi tala kaar tul ha sumblo
Yemberzal pyala heth praraan chhey
Heethat chhastay dubara pholoyo
Goon goon mo kar ha yindro!

(Hum not with pain, my spinning wheel, With scented oils I'll soothe your aches From the mud, O Hyacinth, lift your head, The Narcissus waits with her briming cup. A jasmine plant am I, and will not bloom again. Hum not with pain, my spinning wheel!)

In the verse below the anguish of a woman spurned and denied her rights as a wife is conveyed in dramatic pictures, one can actually see the drama of a love-triangle enacted before our eyes while the all-consuming passion of love broods over it all:

Sona chham gellaan Kuni chum na melaan,
Par zani suti chhuma kelaaney
Ashqa dadi soor gav parbata shilan
Ashqa tsoor phor balveerantey
Ashqa dod hani hani chum telan
Sona chham gelaan krni chum

(My search never ends, while rivals gloat and snigger, With aliens in a foreign land he revels. The blaze of love burnt the Parbat rocks to ashes. Consumed the peace in warriors' hearts, Slowly the pain seeps into my being. While smugly watch my rivals!)

Long before the subject of domestic violence came out of the closet and roused public opinion to force the government to pass a law to deal with it, Arnimal talked about it – more than two hundred years ago. Apart from speaking about the emotional and psychological violence and humiliation she suffered at her husband's hands, she also hints at his physical violence. Only instead of ranting against him, she continued to wish him a long life while exposing his insensitive infidelity and cruelty to her. The last song I quote is remarkable for its physicality, describing a violation of body and spirit. It strikes a powerful note on behalf of all women-victims of one form of betrayal or another,

even while keeping the poetic requirements in mind. The alliterative sounds it plays with the softly musical. Devices of contrast raise the thought to poetry. Deep emotion tempered by irony, pain soothed by sights of beauty, conventional diction suddenly lit up by an unusual phrase:

Hatsi lomnam nenderihatsi matse
Mathsi mathiband sanith gom,
Son nyoonam ratsi ratse,
Vynyoob karith gom.
Vantay vesi vani kus kas patse,
Hatsi lomnam nenderihatsi matse.

(In sleep he grabbed my wrist, maddened am I, The armband digs into my flesh' One by one he tore off my gold, all ornaments he pulled off, Was anyone so deluded as I? Tell me O friend, whom can one trust? Oh how the armband digs into my flesh.)

While the husband, Bhavanidass Kachru might have won some laurels at the Afghan court at Kabul for his Farsi scholarship and poetic skill, his name in Kashmir is for ever smeared by one woman's softly worded but powerful arraignment.

CHAPTER 16

Paramanand: Devotional Raptures of Krishna Lila

S.S. Toshkhani

Bhakti poetry witnessed a great upsurge in Kashmir in the late 18th and 19th centuries when a set of spiritually dedicated poets appeared on the literary scene with their concept of a personal God who can be adored and loved. Directing their devotion to deities like Rama, Krishna, Shiva and the mother Goddess as manifestations of the Ultimate Reality, they looked to the pan-Indian Bhakti movement for inspiration at a time when Persian influence on Kashmiri literature was at its highest with the *ghazal* and *masnavi* becoming the generally adopted modes of expression. This fact in itself is quite significant as it points to an attempt of renewal of contacts with the mainstream of Indian literary tradition. There were, of course, definite socio-religious and political reasons for it, but it nevertheless resulted in the emergence of Bhakti-centred poetry as one of the major trends of 19th century Kashmiri literature. Among the poets who set this trend in motion and distinguished themselves as its leading lights, the name of Paramanand is foremost. He was, in fact, one of the most dominating literary figures of his time in Kashmir, and not merely a religious poet.

While his ability to transform his mystic experiences and spiritual insight into soul – elevating poetry constituted a greater part of his poetic appeal, Paramanand was also a consummate and conscious artist. His claim to greatness lay much in his superb expressive powers as in the devotional passion that informs his works and the high spiritual values that they enshrine. That is what makes him occupy a unique position among his

contemporaries most of whom did little more than imitating Persian *ghazals* and *masnavis* in a manner that betrayed a woeful lack of originality. Amidst sickening repetitions of the worn out *gul* and *bulbul* symbolism, and hackneyed expressions, Paramanand broke a new path with his songs and psalms and litanies and narrative poems saving Kashmiri poetry from stagnation. Bhakti, with the love-sports of the Divine Couple Radha-Krishna at its centre became his point of departure, opening up unlimited possibilities for creative imagination and encompassing in its range unexplored depths of man's emotional and spiritual consciousness. God for him was not a vaguely felt abstraction but the one reality that pervades the whole universe companioning and consoling each human soul. He used the theme of Krishna's divine play to expound a profound philosophy of Love that transcends sectarian barriers and recognizes devotion as the only way to seek the ultimate reality.

Born in 1791 at Sir village near the pilgrimage town of Mattan located on the foot of the mountain leading to Amarnath, Paramanand lived till the ripe old age of 94 – a long span during which he composed masterpieces of Bhakti or *Lila* poetry suffused with deep mysticism. He died in 1885, but it was only in 1941 that the world outside came to know about him when Master Zinda Kaul, himself a great poet, brought out the first of the three volumes of his complete works with an English translation and an excellent introduction. Masterji, as Zinda Kaul is popularly called, was the first to come out with a broad biographical sketch of Paramanand, incorporating as many facts about his life as he could gather. He was also the first to critically edit the text of the saint-poet's works, collating manuscripts made available to him by one of Paramanand's major disciples, Pandit Narayana Kaul. Giving a hint about the methodology adopted by him and the difficulties he encountered in bringing out critical edition of the text. Master Zinda Kaul regrets that the manuscript copies of most of Paramanand's works did not closely adhere to any rules whatever of phonetic or even regularly bad spelling. "Strange as it may seem", he writes, "it did not strike any of them to provide the few additional vowels and consonants essential for the correct writing of Kashmiri in the Persian or Hindi script. In consequence of this negligence it is now extremely difficult to decipher what they have probably ill understood and certainly mis-represented". In such circumstances, Masterji chose to rely on the manuscripts of Pandit Narayan Kaul who had copies "faithfully if not intelligently", from some "older and more authentic manuscript". Masterji has also referred clearly to his anxiousness to let nothing pass for Paramanand's composition which does not bear his stamp.

The other two volumes of Paramanand's works were published by Masterji in 1942 and 1958 respectively, attributing the long gap between the second and the third volumes to the "considerable difficulty" he had to face in seeing it through the press, but without mentioning what this "difficulty" was. Later, selections from the poet-saint's poems were

made for the J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages by Prof. S.K. Toshkhani with an introduction in Kashmiri. In November 1983, the Academy brought out another critical edition of Paramanand's works co-edited by Prof. S.K. Toshkhani and Moti Lal Saqi. In his introduction to the edition (it was published after Prof. Toshkhani's death). Moti Lal Saqi while appreciating Master Zinda Kaul's efforts in making Paramanand's select poems accessible to a wider audience, has accused Masterji of abridging his *Radha Swayamvar* by mixing up and changing the order of several verses and deleting some of them altogether from the actual text. He has also taken Prof. Jai Lal Kaul and other critics to task for having attributed several lyrics written by Paramanand's disciple Lakshman Kaul 'Bulbul' of Nagam to Paramanand without caring to even mention Bulbul's name. Saqi, claims that he and his co-editor have restored in their edition the portions dropped or abridged by Masterji, presented the verses in their actual order and duly mentioned the name of Lakshman Kaul Bulbul wherever his verses or lyrics have been included in his master's works. According to Saqi, the edition co-edited by him with Prof. S. K. Toshkhani is based on a more authentic manuscript that was copied by one Balakram Bhat of Nagam and made available to the co-editors by his grandson Pandit Arjan Nath Bhat.

To be fair to Masterji, he has himself not hesitated in stating that he has given only "selections" from Paramanand's poems, "leaving out much that has been rendered worthless through want of care and lack of intelligence". He has also left it to some "better qualified" future researcher to "restore much that has been dropped now," regretting that he could not obtain "the much more reliable manuscript written by Pandit Lakshmanji of Nagam". While one cannot but appreciate the improvements made in the text by Prof. S.K. Toshkhani and Moti Lal Saqi, there is little that one can add to the facts about the poet-saint's life given by Master Zinda Kaul – at least in the present circumstances. Also one cannot but agree with Masterji's overall assessment of Paramanand's position as a poet, which still holds true. He writes: "Paramanand (Pt. Nand Ram) of Matan easily surpasses all his known predecessors in the technique of metre and rhyme, and all excepting Lalla in mysticism. He is deeply devotional and highly philosophical. His didactic poems and even his psalms and litanies have not yet been surpassed. His forte, however, is the description of Shri Krishna Lila, into which he has thrown all his heart and soul and intellect." This "succinctly sum up" the contribution of Paramanand to Kashmiri Poetry, Prof. Braj Bihari Kachru has pointed out in his book *Kashmiri Literature*.

Not much work has been done on Paramanand since Masterji introduced him to both non-Kashmiris and Kashmiris, no significant light having been thrown on his development as a poet by Prof. Jai Lal Kaul or Motilal Saqi and Prof. S.K. Toshkhani even. Moti Lal Saqi has not said anything substantially different from what master Zinda Kaul has pointed out in his Introduction to his *Paramanand Sukti Sara* (Selected poems of Paramanand). He has made a casual reference to his *Radha Swayamvar* being "related to

the philosophy of Nimbarkacharya" and said something about the presence of "madhurya bhava" in it in a cloyingly flowery language. This, however, does not add up to much. In his *Studies in Kashmiri*, Prof. J. L. Kaul has not gone much beyond what Master Zinda Kaul has said, albeit in a slightly different language, with an attempt to make a point here and there. Prof. Braj B. Kachru has remained contented with doing little more than paraphrasing Masterji. This is virtually all we have in the name of Paramanand studies, except an attempt by this author at a reappraisal of the poet-saint in my *Kashmiri Sahitya Ka Itihas* (History of Kashmiri Literature). Thus a major Kashmiri poet of the 19th century has been disposed off with many aspects of his poetic genius left unexplored. It is my endeavour here to touch upon some of these, though not as exhaustively as I would have liked as that calls for an exclusive and full-fledged study.

What I would like to point out first of all is that Paramanand's philosophy of Bhakti is eclectical, something that he derived from different sources, the alchemy of his poetry transforming everything to what appears to be a profound vision of man's relationship with God. Paramanand is said to have listened to the *Bhagavata* and the *Mahabharata*, the *Shiva Purana* and other religious scriptures at the feet of some Sanskrit scholars with whom he happened to come into contact in his village. He is also believed to have studied the Shiva philosophy of Kashmir as well as Vedanta quite deeply, besides Kundalini Yoga, probably from his family guru Atma Ram and his son, and a Sannyasi Swami Atmanand of Varanasi, with whom he would remain closeted at his own house "for days and months" according to Master Zinda Kaul. Sadhus coming from all over India who passed through Matan on their way to the sacred Amarnath cave, introduced him to the works of the Vaishnava saint-poets of North India like Kabir, Nanak and the compositions of the Sikh holybook *Granth Sahib*. The songs of the famous Hindi Bhakti poet Surdas also reached him in this manner. All these varied influences, and not Nimbarka alone, helped to give shape to his concept of Bhakti and his philosophy of divine love. It is their resonance that one can hear in his poetry. But one thing that is more significant and has gone virtually un-noticed is that Paramanand eventually interprets everything in terms of Kashmir Shaiva thought. His tendency to interiorize situations seems to point towards this fact.

It was at the age of twenty-five, when he had already succeeded his father as the Patwari (village revenue assessment officer) of Matan, that Paramanand "found his tongue" at the temple of the Goddess of Learning, Sarasvati, by the side of the scared spring in his native village Sir. While mediating there, the following lines fell from his lips:

> Listen, it is Sarasvati who is speaking, listen
> Why does it not penetrate into you
> O my soul,
> Though repeated so often.

And that was the beginning of a long journey of his divinely inspired muse. Sarasvati was not the name of the goddess of learning only but also of his mother.

Paramanand's earliest poems were plaints addressed to the Mother Goddess and other Hindu deities "for mercy and forgiveness" and deliverance from sin. Master Zinda Kaul calls them *dinakrandana* or wails of a distressed person, dividing his works into five thematically ordered groups in absence of a clear chronological order evidenced in them. The first of these groups consist of these short hymns with a touch of personal pathos in them, while in the last which he calls the "crowning group", he has placed Vedantic and philosophical poems – "the ripest fruits of his old age and matured wisdom". In the second group he places Paramanand's poems related to the practice of yoga, a longish symbolic poem about the pilgrimage to Amarnath, and one of his most popular allegorical poems *santosha byali bavi ananda phal* (the seed of contentment will yield the harvest of bliss). Grouped next are his three long narrative poems. *Sudama Charitra*, *Radha Swyamvar* and *Shiva Lagna*, followed by some of his short didactic poems meant for spiritual aspirants. Prof. Jai Lal Kaul has reduced the groups to four with poems like the one on Amarnath pilgrimage given the topmost place for their philosophical content.

However, in my opinion such categorization is only of academic value and has little to do with actual evaluation of Paramanand's standing as poet or critical analysis of his poetry. What matters is the poet's awareness of the existential situation and his insight into various aspects of the human condition as also the artistic values which find expression in his work. Looking from this view-point, we can easily discern the high-points of Paramanand's creativity. His genius attained its full fruition in his three narrative poems, the *Radha Swayamyar*, *Sudama Charitra* and *Shiva Lagna* as well as in some of his miscellaneous poems and devotional songs like *Karma Bhimika*, *Sahaz Vyatsar*, *Kul ta Tshay* and *Kasi yama abaya chon preyam ta lolo*.

Radha Svayamyar and *Sudama Charitra*, are both narrative poems depicting the divine play of Krishna and unfolding its deeper meanings through the devices of allegory and metaphor. In both the works incidents from Krishna's life are invested with symbolic dimensions by the use of subtly suggestive words and expressions. There is "strange but deft admixture of the human and the divine" in these works, with Krishna depicted as the Ultimate Reality pervading the whole universe, complete identification with whom alone leads to beatitude. Master Zinda Kaul regards *Sudama Charitra* to be a work preceding *Radha Swayamvar* on the basis of internal evidence. But in Prof. Jailal Kaul's view it was written later as it is a "more mature and objective work". Prof. Kaul finds in *Radha Swayamvar* youthful joy and abandon, which according to him goes to prove that it was written by Paramanand when he was young. Nothing, however, can be said with certainty in this matter, but Prof. Kaul's reliance on stylistics does not take us far as both the works have many stylistic elements in common. For instance, if *Radha Swayamvar* begins with

the adoration of Krishna as "the glorious Lord shining with the light of pure consciousness", *Sudama Charitra* too starts with hailing Devakinandan (the son of Devaki) "on whose birth light dawned out of darkness". Both have the first line as the refrain which is repeated after every three lines. As for the "joyous abandon of youth" that Prof. Kaul finds in *Radha Swayamvar*, it is in the very theme of the poem – the union of Radha and Krishna – that the seed of emotional ecstasy is hidden, the theme of *Sudama Charitra* being of a different nature.

With the question of chronological order far from settled, it is really of little consequence it I start with *Radha Swayamvar* for analyzing the idea of Bhakti as conceived by Paramanand in this masterpiece of devotional poetry. Radha's, and the Gopis', love for Krishna represents the intensive longing of the human soul for full identification with God as the cosmic lover. It is a love that calls for dissolution of the ego and its merger with the supreme consciousness, leaving behind all ideas of difference. In fact, Krishna here himself takes the form of love and not only Radha and the Gopis but all the denizens of Braj establish various relationships with him. As a son he delights his mother, as a friend and companion the cowherd boys and as a lover Radha and the Gopis, who break their bonds with everyone else but him, finding fulfillment in love for him alone. This gives rise to tender situations which are described by Paramanand with great artistic sensitivity and charm. This tendency to interpret everything allegorically in a way that external events get projected as an inner drama ever going on in mind, points to his greatness as a creative genius. His allegory unfolds its dimensions at the very beginning in the work where Krishna is addressed in Kashmir Shaivite terms as "Light of Pure Consciousness."

gokul hriday myon tati chon guryvan
tsyat vimarsh adiptiman bhagvano
vratsa myani gopiya tsey pata laran
bansuri nada vada matano
nasharith hyas ta hosh mashrith par ta pan
tsyat vimarsh adiptiman bhagvano

[Gokul is my heart, where you keep your cows
O Glorious Lord, shining with the
Light of pure consciousness
The instincts of mind are the Gopis
Who hanker after you alone
Maddened by the spell-binding call of your flute
Loosing their senses
And oblivious of self and nonself]

Like the Vaishnava poets of Bengal, Paramanand has made Radha the heroine of *Radha Swayamvar*, and like the followers of Nimbarka's philosophy his devotion is centred in the Divine Couple – Radha and Krishna. The work begins with Radha's birth and childhood frolics and culminates in her marriage with Krishna. The well-known episodes of Krishna's divine play, like his dalliance in the bowers of Vrindavan, playing on the flute, teasing the Gopis, dancing the Rasa dance, stealing the garments of Gopis, removal of Rukmini's pride, departure for Mathura with Akrura, slaying of Kamsa etc have all been incorporated in the story and described with great beauty and imagination. But the spotlight is mainly on Radha and her dedication to Krishna. There are a number of innovations, with Paramanand introducing new episodes like Krishna taking away the garments of Radha and watching her taking a bath, Gopis setting out in search of Krishna who disappears in the midst of Rasa and so on, which point to the poet's ingenuity and innovative skill. But despite the poet's remarkable narrative skill, the emphasis in *Radha Swayamvar* is more on deeper meanings than the outer play, the poet taking us "from the concrete and the real to the abstract and the ideal".

Paramanand's penchant for suggestiveness lends peculiar charm to the narrative in *Radha Swayamvar*. Like a conscious artist, he likes to convey things through subtle suggestion rather than flat description. Thus, Narada is taken aback when he has a look at child Radha's horoscope, and this gesture of his conveys infinitely more than repetition of a thousand epithets like "Mother of the Universe". As in Rupa Goswami's *Ujjvala Nilamani*, Paramanand has portrayed Radha as *svakiya* or a heroine who is faithful to her husband, rather than *parakiya* or a heroine who is the wife of a person other than her loves. He has shown Yashoda affectionate towards the child Radha and eager to make her daughter-in-law. The Gujrati Bhakti poet Bhalan has made Yashoda express a similar desire from her mouth. Paramanand has shown Radha and Krishna attracted towards each other from their childhood giving birth to many a tender situations. At first Radha while courting Krishna's love hides herself away from him and hears the charming notes of his flute from a distance. But soon the two meet and love between them sprouts and grows. Paramanand has portrayed the varied shades of emotions from the simple affection of childhood days to the sweet dreams of adolescence to the delightful amorous play on the advent of full youth with great sensitivity and artistic skill. Radha's father Vrishbhan (Brakhbhan in the work) looks with approval at this youthful attraction between the two and sends his family priest with formal proposal of marriage but there is a sudden hiccup – Krishna's notoriety as butter thief could harm the family's reputation. To avoid an embarrassing situation, Radha's mother sends a rare pearl necklace as a gift to Nanda and Yashoda, expecting that they may not be able to send a return gift according to (Kashmiri) custom. But Krishna snatches away the necklace from Yashoda's hands and sows the pearls at a far off place and from these pearls grows a luxuriant harvest of pearls.

Everybody is askance at this development and the date for the marriage is fixed. This episode is entirely a product of Paramanand's imagination and seems to have been introduced by him not only to make the story more interesting but also to indicate Krishna's divine majesty as the Supreme Being. Paramanand's description of Radha and Krishna's marriage presents an image of the eternal union of *prakriti* and *purusha* (Nature and the Divine Person):

> The god of winds looked to the sweeping of the ways that rain had them plastered with clay; the spirit of spring carpeted the ways with flowers of various hues.
> The sun and moon hold lamps to make illumination; lightening holds the umbrella (of clouds). Maya rocks the cradle in order that the Lord may not be disturbed in his slumber.
>
> [Trs. Master Zinda Kaul]

One of the most beautiful additions introduced in the story, the Mohini episode, which shows Krishna meeting Radha at her house in the guise of woman selling bangles is the creation of Paramanand's disciple Lakshman joo Bulbul. But there are several other episodes, equally innovative and beautiful that have been introduced by the master himself. In one such episode Krishna is shown suddenly disappearing along with Radha while enjoying *Rasa Lila* with the Gopis. This sudden disappearance of the two makes the Gopis mad and distraught, unable to bear separation from their Love. The love-stricken maids search for him in all quarters, wandering from wood to wood and place to place, but they find him nowhere, and hear the flute afar. "Being at the end of their costs, they suffer hallucinations from shadows". And even as they are frantically looking for him, they find "Radha too weeping on the wayside". She who was rejoicing that she was dear to him whom she loved with all her heart, had lost him in the way. This was Krishna's way of humbly her sling as her heart was swelling with the idea that she was his beloved. Weeping and sobbing they all seek in all directions "the one who is beyond space":

> *Vana-vana pheran krishnas vanavan*
> *Hiri gayi viri tang mangano*
> *Heri-bona tsharith heri asa nomran ....*
>
> [Wandering from wood to wood, singing Krishna's praises, they looked like distracted persons expecting help from unlikely quarters (pears from a willow). Finally having searched high and low they bent their heads (in resignation).]
>
> (Trs: Master Zinda Kaul)
>
> *velap yats ta shechi lukan prutshana*
> *vasi maz kansi yus na melano*
> *bansuri vayan tohy ti chhiva bozan ...*

[Amid much sorrowing and weeping they make enquiries from people, 'He whom no one finds in a life-time spent in search is playing the flute, you hear it, don't you?']

(Trs: Master Zinda Kaul)

And then Krishna reappears as suddenly as he had disappeared. They see him come dancing and go into ecstasies at the sight. They can't believe their eyes and it seems to them as if he had all along been where he now was. It is with the intensity of love, Paramanand explains, that Maya disappears and God will reveal himself in everything. And the maidens and Radha dance everyday with Krishna who comes in their midst to dance. They see no one there but Krishna, who himself makes love to himself. Soon the girls become intoxicated with the play in full swing. The *Rasa Lila* transforms their love into mystic devotion and they become ecstatically forgetful in his presence and heartbroken in separation. Paramanand shows even the stones melt and the trees sway under the magic spell of Krishna's flute.

Krishna Kavya (poetry centred round the Krishna theme) is generally associated with transgression of moral codes and breaking of the bonds of domesticity so as to establish links with the Divine Person Krishna alone. There is a strong element of consciousness in its imagery and general tendency to delineate the relationship between Radha and Krishna in erotic terms. Paramanand's *Radha Swayamvar* too celebrates the love between Radha and Krishna but as an emotional relationship rather than expression of the libidinous urge. It is not that the idea of physicality of love is altogether absent, but it is the psychology of love that dominates its interpretation by Paramanand. Prompted by devotional aesthetics, Paramanand depicts as a consummate artist almost every shade of emotion that defines a mind in love from nascent desire to passionate longing to pangs of separation to joy of union. This depiction of emotion and feeling is as restrained as it is beautiful with the poet sublimating the erotic aspect as spiritual fulfillment. This is what we find in some of the most beautiful Rasa songs of the work. Describing the devotional raptures of *Rasa Lila*, Paramanand himself appears to be immersed in the physical experience, identifying himself with the minds of Radha and the cowherd maidens:

Yes, to the circle dance and drunk with wine
Ecstatic thousands come to love and play,
Their interlocking arms a laden vine,
Their call to Radha, Radhakrishnaji

(Trs: Nila Cram Cook)

Paramanand has created Radha's image not by adopting ideas from the *Kamashastra*, but in accordance with his own artistic imagination, making her an embodiment of selfless emotion of love – love totally dedicated to the ideal it adores. She reminds us of Chandidas's

Radha, who is proud because of her pride in Krishna, and beautiful because of the reflection of Krishna's beauty:

Tomarei garbe garbini hay
Rupasi tomar rupe !

In one of the most innovative passages of *Radha Swayamvar*, Paramanand shows Krishna observing Radha as she bathes and hiding away her garments. In trying to find them she catches hold of the Lord, and then she is lost in his arms and no one remain there but Krishna:

We have heard that the black bee
Goes into the jasmine
But not the jasmine into the bee
Yet Radha here disappears into Krishna!

This is the most beautiful moment of Radha's life as depicted in the work. In the terminology of Bhakti, this is advaita, the ideal state of non-duality! Here Paramanand shows Radha as inseparable from Krishna, his own "inner, self-identifying power." As for the Gopis, they are "a multiple personality" of Radha, a "composite entity," but like her they get submerged into the all-embracing Reality called Krishna, experiencing the bliss which Paramanand himself wants to share with them.

Apart from sublimation of erotic love, one of the most notable features of *Radha Swayamvar* is its lyrical intensity. Not only has the narrative been composed in the popular strains of the Kashmiri *vatsan* lyric with the first line coming as the refrain at the end of every three lines, hymns and songs have been interspersed throughout the work at emotionally sensitive places. Paramanand would himself be carried away by emotion while reciting these *lilas* accompanied by *madham* (a stringed musical instrument) and dance in ecstasy. Some of these songs have been composed in a queer but delightful admixture of Hindi, Punjabi and Kashmiri – a dialect that he himself calls Bhakha. Prof. Braj B. Kachru describes this mixed dialect as "ode-mixed variety of Kashmiri". According to Master Zinda Kaul, the "mixed dialect" of these bhakha songs may be ungrammatical and unidiomatic, but all the same it is "delightful as it is amusing to guess his meaning and relish the depth of his tender thoughts of divine love and the high flights of his philosophy". It is interesting to note that at one place in *Radha Swayamvar* Paramanand shows the cowherd boys and girls praising Krishna in Hindi!

Hindi zyevi suty asis totan
Hari tota ada-kaji bolano
Zonmut na kenh ta prema-ved paran

[They praised him in their own tongue (Hindi), lisping like parrots and mynas. Though they were illiterate they recited the Veda of love].

(Trs: Master Zinda Kaul)

Without going into the question of precedence or sequence, *Sudama Charitra* appears to me to be a work of considerable maturity. Prof. Jai Lal Kaul attributes this to structural compactness, considering the fact there are a few, only two, songs in the work. But that could be because of the limitations of the story itself which does not leave much room for the imagination to have a free run. There is, however, a bhava or a great philosophical idea that runs through the whole work like blood circulating through the arteries, and that idea is that of dissolution of the ego which alone gives one the capacity to experience the bliss that comes through the grace of God. Three hundred years before Paramanand the great Hindi saint – poet Surdas had woven the fabric of his poetry around the vision of God as man's friend and companion, and so had the German poet Rilke. We find the same vision at the centre of Paramanand's concept of the relationship between man and God in *Sudama Charitra*. According to Paramanand it is the sense of ego in the individual soul that creates the illusion of separation of distance between the two who are otherwise closest to each other, in fact inseparable. The idea of separate individuality results from individual will and this is what proves to be the undoing of Sudama. This is illustrated by Sudama eating "his own" rice stealthily, without sharing it with his friend Krishna, and this is what brings all the misery upon him, making him suffer immensely. But when *shubhechha* (good intention) prompted by *sadbuddhi* (right intuition) symbolized by Sushila (Sudama's wife) arises in the mind, the *jiva* (individual soul) starts his journey towards Dwarka and all suffering ends. Use of metaphor and allegory is a favourite technique of Paramanand, which he has employed in *Sudama Charitra* also to interpret the episode of friendship between Krishna and ·Sudama on the spiritual plane as self-realization. This is what makes *Sudama Charitra* a significant poetic work. Krishna and Sudama retain the natural and human aspects of their personalities even as they give movement and meaning to the story as symbolic characters. This is perhaps what Masterji means when he says that Paramanand's narration is "full of hints on the inner, spiritual meaning". The allegory, according to him, is like "five acts of a classical drama", where Krishna is God; Sudama is the human soul; Sushila, the wife of Sudama, is Buddhi or intention; Dwaraka is the 'Kingdom of God'.

Sudama Charitra does not begin with Sudama's tale of woes but with the childhood exploits of Krishna, describing which Paramanand exhibits Surdas-like sensibility at places. Entire Braj exults at Krishna's birth and the poet seems to join the chorus of voices hailing it:

Gati manza gash av chane zyanay
Jay-jay-jay Devaki-nandanay.

[Light dawned (on the world) out of the darkness when you were born. Hail, all hail, O you son of Devaki!]

His childhood frolics and pranks like the stealing of butter, the tending of cows with the cowherd boys, the teasing of Gopis, the simple joys amidst an idyllic setting fill the initial pages of the work. Every cowherd girl of Braj rushes to Yashoda with her loving complaints just to have a glance of the child Krishna, to associate a few moments of her life with him, vying with each other for his attention.

"He breaks my milk-pots, and mine, and mine".

Harrassed by the complaints, Yashoda runs after him with a cow's halter in her hand to bind him. And what follows is one of the most beautiful passage of the work:

Muratagar yas na surat gande
Tas mani yas chha na durat gande
Gyan-dhyan gandanas chha na poshanay

[He whose likeness no painter can portray, he held in his heart by him alone who does not think him to be far from him. Learning and contemplation fail to form an image of him]

The story of Sudama and his grinding poverty comes and develops in the context of these childhood episodes of Krishna's life. In the words of the poet, Sudama is not just Krishna's friend but an intimate part of his childhood:

Sudamaji os yar bhagvanas
Balabhav kya tu lokachar bhagvanas

[Sudama the Jiva (individual soul), was the friend of the Lord. O, the wonderful childhood and childish ways of him!]

But the sense of ego, of separate will, awakens in Sudama's mind. The feeling of individuality grows and strengthens. This is indicated by his eating his rice secretly which results in the separation of the two close friends who were one like the mind and the soul. With his innocence gone and ego getting the better of him, Sudama suffers inevitably and lives a life of abject poverty with his wife Sushila and children. The poet here focuses more on Sudama's egoism than on the description of his wretched condition. The only way he can free himself from worldly suffering is renunciation of ego, and so when his wife Sushila prompts him, he repents and the good intention to return Godwards is born

in his mind. It is initially divine grace and mercy that makes Sushila to urge him to go to the Dwarka of Liberation, the abode of his childhood friend Krishna. With this the entire scenario begins to change. Krishna is shown here even more eager to meet Sudama. Overwhelmed by emotion, he rushes to greet Sudama even before he reaches the outskirts of Dwarka. Paramanand describes all this movingly, but without forgetting to invest it with a spiritual meaning:

Tora drav bhagvan Sudarshanay
Yora Sudama jiv gos arpanay
Panvunya vuchhan lajay svapanay

[On that side came the Lord, the Beauteous (self of all), on this Sudama, the Jiva, surrendered himself to Him. Both felt as if they were dreaming (so overjoyed that they did not believe their eyes).]

(Trs: Master Zinda Kaul)

The idea that Paramanand wants to impress is that friendship between the individual soul and God is not a one-sided affair but a feeling that both share, both desirous of coming close to one another. It is a relationship of pure love. When Jiva or the individual soul dissolves his ego and surrenders himself before God's will, God too is filled with compassion for him and endows him with his grace. The feeling of separateness goes and this world of sorrow, vain and essenceless as it is, ceases to exist. Only bliss remains – an experience impossible for words to describe. And this is the experience that Sudama too has after he sets out for his rendezvous with Krishna at Dwarka. A glimpse of his state of mind as he begins his journey Godwards is given by Paramamand in these words:

Sodras thah tas ashine dhare
Nav nata nishana nav kor tare
Bhav tas hanz bathya ta her havanay

[With incessant flow of tears he had taken a plunge, as it were, into the sea. Where there is neither name nor sign (of a route or destination), whither could he steer his boat? But Love became his pilot, (and encouraged him on by) pointing to shores (enroute).]

(Trs: Master Zinda Kaul)

Wetting the path with his tears, he advances "little by little" towards his friend, forgetting "weariness and fatigue for his friend's sake". Finding Sudama so unexpectedly, Krishna too is overcome with such joy as one may find "sun during the night". This time Krishna makes no mistake. He snatches the rice that Sudama had brought for him as a gift wrapped in Sushila's torn sari. As if to clear Sudama's earlier debt, he starts eating it in handfuls till Rukmini holds his hand. And now Krishna sees himself alone filling all

quarters. "Sudama was nowhere, Krishna alone was everywhere". Krishna may not have given him "even a broken shell", but Sudama's entire outlook changes after his commission with his Friend. His poor little thatched hut appears to him as beautiful as any jewel bedecked palace. Sushila too receives divine grace. She sees Sudama coming from a distance "shining like the sun risen in the east." With ignorance gone their transformation is complete.

It is not as though his intimation towards allegorisation and metaphorical expression has made Paramanand forget the human and natural aspect of the story. Paramanand's success as a poet lies in the fact that he creates two parallel worlds of meaning by means of word-play, artistic use of puns and double entendre being his favourite devices. This ability to suggest more in few words with the help of allusions and verbal artistry reveals an important dimension of his creative genius. That is the reason why the natural flow of the narrative does not get chocked under the weight of metaphysical expression. It is a flow that appears to run unimpeded throughout the work. Thus, while we find in the reunion of Krishna and Sudama the idea of the ultimate union of the individual soul and the Supreme Being unfolded to us, we also hear the human heart of Sudama beating in situations of inner-conflict, doubt, puzzlement, apprehension, wonder and delight.

Shiva Lagna is the third and last narrative poem composed by Paramanand. It has for its theme the well-known Puranic story of Sati's rebirth as Parvati and her love for Shiva and her marriage with him. There are one or two additions and innovations which give the story some interesting twists. For instance, Sati is shown to meet her predicament because of having doubted the divinity of Rama. How can a man "who weeps and cries 'O Sita, O Sita!' be God?" she asks. And it is this *avidya* and doubting that leads her eventually to her self-immolation at Daksha's yajna and take re-birth as Parvati. Parvati's penance to obtain Shiva as a husband is also given a twist. Sages and saints are shown to come to dissuade her, but she gets angry with them. Finding her distraught, her parents send their family priest in search of a match, but he is directed by Parvati to go to Kailasa where Shiva himself is in the guise of the ascetic. Scared by the wilderness and upset by bitter cold, the priest returns after receiving from the ascetic (Shiva) a few coals to warm himself with. On his return he finds the coals turned into gold. Parvati's marriage with Shiva is fixed, and the rest of the story is as given in the Puranas. Here too we have allegory and the marriage between Shiva and Parvati is interpreted as the union of "one's self with one-self". *Shiva Lagna* lacks the poetic beauty and depth of *Radha Svayamvar* amd *Sudama Charitra*, but at places we do find examples of metaphysics beautifully fusing with aesthetics. One such example is the description of Shiva's abode Mount Kailasa in winter:

> There winter has its glass-house
> And everything is of incomparable beauty

The crystal houses of ice have plinths of pearl
And Spring is agitated there
Looking at the glistening glaciers

The description of Shiva's procession has introduced a folklore-like flavour in the story, which has a charm of its own. The family priest's behaviour as the go-between in Parvati's marriage with Shiva and Shiva as the old bridegroom provide quite a stimulus for humour. Women do not fail to have a dig at the white-bearded divine bridegroom and his strange-looking marriage procession:

You ought to wait for some time, the woman said
Even your moustaches have not appeared

But there is not much beyond this in the work that merits attention. Among the miscellaneous poems of Paramanand, *Karma Bhumika*, *The Tree and the Shade*, *Sahaz Vyatsar* and *Amarnath Yatra* are considered to be the most notable. However, not all of them are important from the point of view of Bhakti, most of them being didactic or mystical in tone. *Karma Bhumika* is a long poem which is considered remarkable "for the intimate welding of the farmer's round of duties with the spiritual aspirant's sadhana". Using the terminology of farming, the poem exhorts the aspirant to live life in accordance with high spiritual values. The main idea that the poem conveys is that if the seed of contentment is sown in the field of conduct fertilized by righteousness it will yield the harvest of joy. The poem *The Tree and the Shade* emphasizes non-dualism between individual and universal consciousness. The two are basically one, the poet says, but appear to be different because of the individual soul's sense of ego. As soon as the awareness of oneness dawns, the ego vanishes, he explains using the allegory of the tree and its shade. Both Masterji and Prof. Jai Lal Kaul regard Paramanand's poem concerning the pilgrimage to the Amarnath cave in Kashmir his highest achievement as a poet. The poem in which a parallel is drawn between various stages of the pilgrimage and the yogi's ascent from *chakra* to *chakra* till his final entrance into the thousand petalled lotus. In *Sahaz Vyatsar*, the poet appears to touch the highest point of his spiritual awareness. These poems go beyond outward formalism and sectarian considerations and emphasize the importance of the individual's identification with the Supreme Being through devotion. A look at his prolific poetic output, his oeuvre, is enough to convince one that Paramanand occupies a unique place in Kashmiri *Lila* poetry.

In spite of their religious or Puranic theme his *Radha Swayamvar*, *Sudama Charitra* and *Shiva Lagna* are delightfully convincing in their social appeal also. In fact, these poetic works of Paramanand consist of great poetry "combing the Vaishnavite fervour with Shaiva abandon".

CHAPTER 17

Prakash Ramayana and other Works on Ramayana Theme in Kashmiri

S.S. Toshkhani

The Ramayana lore has exerted a tremendous influence on the Indian mind, holding equal fascination for the elite and the common masses and serving as an inexhaustible source of ideas and concepts for works of literature and art. In Kashmir too, as in other parts of the country, familiarity with the Rama-story has existed since very early times. Though not as pervasive as the Krishna legend, it has inspired a good body of creative and critical literature there besides permeating folklore forms such as ballads and wedding songs. In the *Nilamata Purana*, a 6th century text, we find Rama mentioned as an incarnation of Vishnu, along with Sita and Lakshmana:

> *Chaturvimshati sankhyanam tretayam Raghunandanah*
> *Harir manushoyo bhavita Ramam Dashrathatmajah* (v 500)

> [In the 24th Treta, Hari shall assume the form of a human being, Raghunandana, Rama, son of Dashratha.]

> *Ramam salakshmanam Sitam shesham eva dharanidharam* (v 547)

Shatrughana's name has also come up along with Rama and Lakshmana at another place – *Shatrughnau Ramalakshmanau* (v 913). As for Sita, an entire day has been kept apart during the Mahimana festival for worshipping as a goddess:

Ramapatni tatha pujya Sita devi prayatnatah (v 522)
[The goddess Sita, wife of Rama, should be worshipped with effort.]

The *Nilamata* also enjoins upon people to worship Rama along with Lakshmana and Sita during the ceremony related to the commencement of cultivation (*Krishyarambha*). However, no events of Rama's life are described in this Purana although it speaks of Vishnu more than any other deity.

But in the Sanskrit literature produced in Kashmir we find not only ample evidence of awareness of the Ramayana tradition, but also of critical and creative writing based on themes derived from it. Thus we have Anandavardhana speaking in his *Dhvanyaloka* about how *shoka* or sorrow was transformed into *shloka* or verse and pointing out that the Rasa theory was derived from the sorrowful utterance of Valmiki, the first of poets *shokah shlokatvamagatah*. At another place he protests against taking indiscriminate liberties with the Rama-story in the name of innovation as this goes against the theory of Rasa. Another great Sanskrit aesthetician of Kashmir, Mammata, made the famous observation *Ramadivat vartitvayam na Ravanadivat* (One should behave like Rama etc. and not like Ravana etc.), which has become our national heritage.

While several rhetoricians from Kashmir have cited the Valmiki Ramayana for illustrating their concepts, there have been others who have based their literary works on the theme. For example, the great 11th century polyglot Kshemendra has written the *Ramayana Manjari*, alongside *Bharatmanjari*" and the *Brihatkathamanjari*, a work that runs into 6400 stanzas and follows the course of the story given in the Valmiki Ramayana. But far from being a mere abridgement of Valmiki's great epic, as is generally supposed, it is a representation of the story with some portions re-done and several deviations and changes incorporated. Towards the end of the work Kshemendra, referring to Rama's exile in the prime of his youth, his life in the forest, the stinging loss of Sita and the mischievous gossip about her and her final predicament, says, "It is all sorrow':

Sarvam dukhamayam tadastu bhavatam shlaghayo vivekodayah
[It is all sorrow; may it lead you to blessed *vairagya* and *viveka*.]

In another work of his, the *Dashavataracharitam*, a poem on the ten incarnations of Vishnu, Kshemendra has given a short account of Rama in 293 verses. Curiously enough the account starts with Ravana's story, with Rama's story taken from the Panchavati episode and Ravana's attempt to carry Sita away. It concludes after several episodes of Uttarakanda or Rama's later life. Kshemendra also wrote a play, *Kanaka Janaki*, on the later story of Rama, named so after the golden image of Sita with which Rama had to perform his *ashvamedha* as he had abandoned Sita who was languishing in Valmiki's hermitage.

Somadeva's *Kathasaritsagara* too contains some anecdotes of Ramayana, quite a few of them not found in Valmiki but in the Khotanese and Tibetan versions of the epic. As pointed out by Prof. P.N. Pushp, it may be noted, however, that these versions themselves are based on the story transmitted from Kashmir along with some other places. Even long before both Kshmendra and Somadeva we have the Kashmiri poet Bharatamentha, the author of *Hayagrivavadha*, who is counted by Rajashekhara in the prologue to his *Balaramayana* as an author of the Ramayana theme along with Bhavabhuti and himself. Unfortunately, the work is not available today, as is the case with many other Sanskrit works from Kashmir.

While this shows that the Ramayana tradition in Kashmir has been vibrant in Sanskrit, we know of no work on the theme written in the Kashmiri language before the 19th century. This is surprising indeed, considering the fact that there is a great wealth of folklore – folksongs, folk ballads, folk tales, proverbs and sayings – in this language, drawing deeply upon the Rama story and making allusions to its characters and episodes.

Only a few decades back these folk songs and ballads reverberated in every Hindu home in Kashmir and were sung with great emotion. The absence of any literary work on the theme in Kashmiri for centuries on till the 19th century is, therefore, difficult to explain without presuming that many such works may have been destroyed due to continuous political turmoil in the land after the advent of Islam. Surely, an undercurrent, of Ramayana tradition, however feeble, must have been present in Kashmiri language in the period preceding Sikh or Dogra rule, as indicated by the existence of the profuse folklore inspired by it. Yet, the fact cannot be denied that Rama cult received a big boost because of the patronage of Dogra rulers whose tutelary deity was Rama. Prior to them *Ragis* or itinerant Sikh singers had played their role in popularizing it by reciting passages from the Bhagavata and the *Rama-charita-manasa* alongside of the *sakhis* and *bhajans* from the *Granth Sahib*. Perhaps it was in this situation that Kashmiri poets felt encouraged to write on the theme and a number of Ramayanas appeared in the language in quick succession in a period of about one century. Each of these Ramayanas has its own literary merit, with each author presenting the common theme according to his own creative genius and each interpreting the story in his own way. Chronologically, the first of these, according to Prof. P. N. Pushp, was the *Shankar Ramayana*, first written in the Sharada script in 1843 and later transcribed into Devanagari characters during the reign of Maharaja Ranbir Singh in 1888. But the most popular and indeed the best of them was the *Ramavataracharita*, more commonly known as *Prakash Ramayana*, which was composed in 1846. It is also the only Kashmiri Ramayana to have appeared in print, the rest being still in the manuscript form. The next Ramayana to be written in Kashmiri was the *Vishnupratap Ramayana*, composed by Vishnu Kaul in 1913. It was followed by Nilakanth

Sharma's *Sharma Ramayana*, which was written between 1919 and 1926, and modeled on Tulasidasa's *Rama-charita-manasa*. Soon after came the *Tarachand Ramayana* in 1927 written by Tarachand, and after it Amarnath wrote his *Amar Ramayana* in 1940. The seventh, and the last in series, was the *Ananda Ramayana* by Ananda Ram.

Prakash Ramayana

Prakash Ramayana enjoys immense popularity among Kashmiri Hindu masses, partly because the wide reach that it had on account of being printed in all the three scripts in vogue in Kashmir – Persian, Devanagari and Roman – but mainly because of its folk diction, its poetic qualities and the songs and ballads interspersed throughout its text. Till recent decades its songs were on the tip of almost everyone's tongue and were sung in every Hindu home in the Valley on festive occasions, especially on weddings. The author of the work, Prakashram, lived in Kurigam, a sylvan little village some two or three miles away from the town of Qazigund on the Jammu-Srinagar highway. In the edition of the work published in the Roman script by Royal Astatic Society of Bengal in 1930, Grierson wrongly gave the author's name as Diwakar Prakash Bhatt, placing him in the time of Raju Sukhjeevan Mal (1754-62). The scribe of the original manuscript of the work also created some confusion by giving its date of composition as 1804 Vikrami. That this was an orthographic error, was later proved by Dr. B.N. Pandit, who gave the actual date as 1904 Vikrami, which corresponds to the year 1846 of the Christian era.

Prakash Ramayana actually consists of two works by the same author, the *Ramavtaracharita* and its sequel the *Lavakusha Charita*, both later published as a combined text. The ballad with which the work opens, *Rama-Lakhyman avatari ay* (Rama and Lakshmana came as incarnations of God), is not considered by many to be Prakashram's work but a popular folk ballad incorporated by him in the text at a later stage. The first edition printed at Pratap Steam Press contains 2,540 verses, while Grierson's edition in Roman script has just 1,103, showing that it is only an abridged edition with several original episodes having been altogether dropped. In 1965, the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Literature and Languages published a revised and improved edition in the Persian script, edited with a critical introduction by Dr. B.N. Pandit. Later in the seventies, Dr. Omkar Kaul conducted further research on the work and brought out a well-edited Devanagari edition, with Hindi translation, as did Dr. Shibban Krishan Raina. Dr. Kaul presented his study in the context of Ramayana tradition in other Indian languages. However, Dr. Kamil Bulcke, the noted Ramayana scholar, and some other Hindi scholars based their assessment of *Prakash Ramayana* on the version brought out by Grierson.

Structural Features

Prof. J.L. Kaul has described *Prakash Ramayana* as "the first Razmia Masnavi in Kashmiri" – a view supported by a few other scholars also. But though it has absorbed some influences of the *Masnavi* style, it can in no way be placed in the *Masnavi* tradition. It is essentially different from it, both in its spirit and form, and follows the pattern of, as the very title suggests a *charita kavya*, that is a narrative poem describing the life and exploits of a hero. And the hero in this case happens to be no ordinary human being but a divine incarnation born to deliver the earth from evil. The poet has made this clear at the very outset when he tells us that he is narrating the story of the *lila* or divine play of Rama on this earth to propagate the ideal of Bhakti. Rama, he explains, is the embodiment of the highest human values and, at the same time, the Supreme Being, as such, the story of Rama is "a bridge that takes us across the river of desire" and leads us to truth. "The demon", says Prakash Ram, "is within us" and can be destroyed with the sword of true knowledge and the shield of righteousness as weapons. According to this symbology, Sita stands for "pure will" (at another place she is shown to be the Earth Goddess personified), Dashratha stands for Dharma, Kaushalya symbolizes the writ of destiny, Kaikeyi represents mind's fickle nature. Extending the allegory further, Hanumana symbolizes courage and Ravana falsehood; Sugriva, Angada, Jambavanta and Vibhishana are all noble virtues personified. The whole action thus is shown as taking place inside the human mind. And with Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughna and down to the humblest monkey in Rama's simian army shown as incarnation of this aspect of divinity or that, it is no wonder that the poet describes his work as having the "sacred ambience of the Puja-room". This, however, cannot be taken to mean that Prakash Ram has ignored the human aspect of his characters. He has unfolded the drama of human emotions, passions and feelings within the parameters of a spiritual subject matter as artistically and skillfully as was possible for a poet of his age and grounding. His adroitness in blending the spiritual and the temporal in a way that both the religious-minded people and serious students of literature find it equally interesting, testifies to his poetic maturity. His Rama is thus as much a son of Dashratha as the supreme object of worship for all human beings. What makes Prakash Ram's *Ramayana* so interesting is that its narrative fabric is woven by placing the major characters in difficult and challenging situations wherein they have to make crucial moral choices and take equivocal decisions.

Deviations and Variations

As pointed out earlier, *Prakash Ramayana* follows the broad outlines of the story as given in the *Valmiki Ramayana* and *Adhyatma Ramayana*, but at the same time it introduces several variations and additions that give it a certain distinctiveness. Taking liberties with

the classical sources while depicting details, its author Prakash Ram presents and reorders the episodes according to his imaginative and creative genius. He treats some of them elaborately and leaves some out altogether or cuts them short. One of the main beyond all attributes. Seeking to project Rama's image as the Protector of the Devotees and Deliverer of the World, Prakashram Kurigami draws upon both Valmiki and the Adhyatma Ramayana as his main sources with traces of influence from other versions of the Rama-story like the *Ramacharitamanasa*, *Adbhut Ramayana* and Krittivasa's *Ramayana*.

Following broadly the course of the story as given in the Valmiki Ramayana, Prakash Ram divides his narrative into seven *kandas* or books – Bala Kanda, Ayodhya Kanda, Aranya Kanda, Kishkindha Kanda, Sundara Kanda, Yuddha Kanda and Uttara Kanda, exactly as we find in most *Ramakavyas* in other Indian languages. These *kandas* are further arranged under sub-titles denoting various high-points of the story, following the *Masnavi* style. In the published versions, the *Lava-Kusha-Charita* has been incorporated at the end as a sort of epilogue without being given the nomenclature of a separate *kanda*. The metre used for narration is *bahar-e-hajaz*, a Persian metre in which *Masnavis* are generally written. There are also a number of *lilas* or devotional songs, lyrics and ballads interspersed throughout the narrative which have given Prakash Ramayana a unique texture – that of a folk-epic with its folk diction and colloquial style rather than that of a classical epic. Perhaps it is for this reason that Dr. B.N. Pandit has placed it in the category of the English ballad. It must be appreciated that in an age when Persian influence dominated the literary scene in Kashmir, and most Kashmiri poets freely plagiarized from Persian classics, Prakashram Kurigami showed the courage of choosing the Rama-story for the subject matter of his work and thereby offering something new and fresh and truly folk-oriented rather than dishing out stale tales from distant Persia in a highly artificial diction and hackneyed style.

In *Prakash Ramayana*, the story has been told in the form of a dialogue between Shiva and Parvati as in the *Adhyatma Ramayana* and to some extent in the *Rama-charita-manasa*. Presenting it as an eternal conflict between truth and falsehood, and good and evil, the poet has given it allegorical dimensions and has tried to find esoteric meanings in it. Explaining what he believes to be the "meaning of Ramayana", he has shown the battle between Rama and Ravana as going on eternally in the mind's Lanka. Understood features of his work are incorporation of elements from folk versions in shaping some episodes. What makes it extraordinary is that it depicts Ravana, the King of Demons, as Sita's father, thus indicating a kind of Oedipus tangle at the root of the struggle against the forces of darkness. This appears to be a common feature in all Kashmiri Ramayanas, though the details differ in each case. The *Adbhut Ramayana* also gives its own version of how Sita came to be the daughter of Ravana.

According to the account given in *Prakash Ramayana*, astrologers declared Sita as inauspicious as soon as she was born, and Ravana put her inside a wooden box and shove it into the river. As the infant was washed ashore, a washer-man rescued her and took her to King Janaka who brought her up as his own daughter. Strangely, everyone seems to know this fact except Ravana.

Another departure from Valmiki pertains to the account of Jatayu's death. *Prakash Ramayana* shows Ravana forcing Sita to reveal the secret of Jatayu's death and accordingly he makes him eat stones smeared with his (Ravana's) own blood. Prakashram makes the episode quite touching by showing Rama himself performing the last rites of the valorous old avian devotee of his.

In his work, Prakashram tries to give a humorous touch to some of the episodes not found in the classical Ramayanas. For example, when Hanumana is brought bound in Ravana's court, he suddenly jerks his head in a manner that Ravana falls down from his throne and rolls straight into the river. At another place we see Angada running away with Ravana's crown and returning only after he has shown it to Rama and others in his camp, chuckling with glee and much pleased with his own self. Hanumana's burning tail, however, does not evoke laughter from Sita who feels greatly upset and prays to Agni, the Fire God, for protecting him from any harm. Tender affection for him fills her heart and in her distress she threatens Agni that she will sweep him away in the flood of her tears if anything untoward happens to Hanumana.

The episodes of Hanumana's encounter with Makaradhwaja and of the Makkeshwara linga are purely Prakashrama's innovations not to be found in any other Ramayana. The story of the abduction of Rama and Lakshmana by Mahiravana to the nether world at the behest of Ravana who was fighting a losing battle is found in several folk versions, as, for example, in the Malayalam work *Patalravana*. The story has gone to South East Asia and is included in the Thai Ramayana. The *Prakash Ramayana* describes this episode with its main focus on Hanumana's extraordinary valour in rescuing his masters. But what makes it most interesting is the induction of the story of his chance encounter with Makaradhwaja, who turns out to be his own son. Born of Makari, a sea creature who swallows Hanumana's weight when he was taking his great leap across the sea and becomes pregnant, Makaradhwaja is guarding the gates of Mahiravana's palace when Hanumana arrives there on his rescue mission. A mere boy, he challenges Hanumana to serious combat and fights valiantly, not knowing his identity. Hanumana feels inexplicably drawn to him even while playfully fighting with him. And while they are thus engaged, the wounded Makaradhwaja mentions the name of Hanumana as his father. Both are astonished when their mutual identities are revealed to them. In an upsurge of sudden affection, both of them hold each other in embrace and are choked with emotion as they relate their stories to each other. This meeting between the father and the son is one of

the most poignant scenes in *Prakash Ramayana*, revealing the tender side of the personality of the great simian god whom everyone supposes to be as hard as the thunderbolt outwardly. This is something that we do not come across in any other work on the Ramayana theme.

The Makaradhwaja Linga episode is unique in a similar way. It is entirely a product of Prakashrama's imagination. Shocked and disappointed at Mahiravana's death at the hands of Hanumana, Ravana goes to Kailasa to pray to Shiva and obtains from him a Shivalinga known as Makkeshwara to overcome Rama in battle. However, there is one condition – he must never put the linga down on the ground on his way back to Lanka as in that case it shall remain where it is and not budge from the place. But things do not go his way as Narada props up as though from nowhere and plays a trick, suddenly Ravana feels an urge to urinate. And when he is not able to resist it, he finds an old Brahmana passing that way. Relieved, he requests the Brahmana, who is none else than Narada in disguise, to hold the linga for him till he returns. But Ravana's urine flows like a river and there seems no end to it. Seeing Ravana take so much time, the Brahmana puts the linga down on the ground and goes away. There is nothing Ravana can do to move it from there and he has to return to Lanka empty-handed and dejected.

In the *Lava-Kusha-Charita* too there are several episodes that occur nowhere in the classical Ramayanas, though they have close parallels in some other versions of the Rama-story. For example, Sita's banishment by Rama is shown to be the result of her sister-in-law's mischief and not the malicious gossip of the washer-man. The sister-in-law persuades Sita to draw a sketch of Ravana and then poisons Rama's ears against her, creating a doubt in his mind about her fidelity. Again, unlike any other Ramayana, Prakashrama's work shows Sita revolting in the end against the injustice meted out to her. She shuts herself up in Valmiki's hermitage and refuses to open the door for Rama despite his repeated entreaties to her to return with him to Ayodhya. Repulsing Rama's appeals, Prakashrama's Sita recapitulates the wrongs he had done to her. Valmiki's pleadings go in vain as Rama seems to have no answer to Sita's pathetic plaints.

Some other features peculiar to *Prakash Ramayana* are:

(i) Narayana appears to Dasharatha in a dream and make him aware that he has to descend on the earth as his son. It is after this that Dasharatha performs the *putrakameshthi yajna*.

(ii) There is no mention of Manthra and her attempt to incite Kaikeyee. It is Indra who asks Saraswati to delude her mind so that she asks Dasharatha for Rama's banishment to the forest.

(iii) Likewise, there is no mention of Shabari.

(iv) Parushurama's antics at Sita's swayamvara and Lakshmana's rebuff to him are not given in Dr. B.N. Pandit's version or the earlier versions. However, they are mentioned in the version edited by Dr. Omkar Kaul.

(v) Rama is shown performing the obsequious rites (*shraddha*) of Dashratha in the forest.

(vi) While Lava is born naturally to Sita, Kusha is created by Valmiki.

Local Colour

With these enriching innovations and peculiarities, Prakashram's Kashmiri Ramayana has acquired a unique form and an important place in the Ramayana literature in Indian languages. Of great interest is the tendency of the poet to make an alluring use of local elements and local colour in his work. This has been done with such a great effect that the narrative appears to be placed in a typically Kashmiri setting. The pictures of Kashmiri life that the poet has depicted captivate the reader's interest – the customs, the rites, the festivals, the beliefs and, more than anything else, the natural environment of the Kashmir Valley, all depicted with great felicity. There are numerous references to the melting of the snow and the advent of spring heralded by the birds of Kashmir. All the flowers of the Kashmir Valley are shown blooming in Ashokavana where Sita is kept in confinement by Ravana, with the joyous seasons of Kashmir prevailing even in Lanka turning it into a *baga-bahara swargadwara* or a "paradisal garden, a virtual gateway to heaven". These very flowers bloom in their full exuberance to welcome Rama when he returns to Ayodhya after his victory.

On Rama's wedding with Sita, all the goddesses of Kashmir – Pingala, Mangala, Vijaya, Sharda, Sharika, why even the 18th century Kashmiri saint-poetess Rupa Bhavani – come to bless them and shower flowers on them. Some even adorn them with ornaments. The wedding is shown taking place in the typical Kashmiri Hindu manner with rites and ceremonies like *dwara puza, posha puza* etc. performed in all details. The wedding songs are exactly like those that Kashmiri Hindu women sing on such occasions – some of these songs having become very popular. Even nature is depicted at several places bedecked like a Kashmiri damsel and wearing the typical Kashmiri female attire – *puts, taranga* (ladies headgear), *pheran* etc.

But the poet Prakashram is unsparing in showing Rama as extremely unjust in his repudiation and banishment of Sita though he blames a supposed sister-in-law of Sita for the mischief. It is she who incites Rama against his faithful and beautiful wife, the embodiment of virtue. Prakashrama points out very poignantly how Sita has suffered since her very birth, yet he does not forget to remind us repeatedly that Rama is the incarnation of the highest reality and shows almost every character, including Ravana, singing devotional songs in his praise and paying obeisance to him at one point of time or another.

Prakash Ramayana glorifies Sita, identifying her with Goddess Earth herself, perhaps for her endurance and patience, kindness and compassion, forgiveness and generosity –

qualities that have been tested to the limit. She is also venerated as Lakshmi, the Mother of the Universe, who has taken birth in the human form as the daughter of King Janaka and is the beautiful, charming and faithful wife of Rama for deliverance of the world from sin. Yet she is the most tragic character in the whole work, abandoned at the time of her birth by her real parents, abducted by the demon king who wanted to make her the object of his lust, forsaken by her husband to whom she has been faithful all her life and for whose love she had chosen to leave all comfort and luxury and accompany him to the forest. Prakashram Kurigami is one of those authors of the Rama-story who have brought out the tragic irony of Sita's life most poignantly.

Perhaps he is the only author who has shown Sita revolting in the end against the grave injustice done to her by Rama. When even after having made her undergo the ordeal by fire Rama doubts her fidelity and banishes her to the forest, she can take it no longer and speaks out against the humiliation and suffering that Rama inflicts upon her for no fault of hers. This is a different Sita we come across in no other Ramayana. After having lived for many years in exile when she sees Rama coming to her, she refuses to meet him and shuts herself up in Valmiki's hermitage, not opening the door for him despite all his entreaties as she recapitulates all the wrongs he had done to her. And when on Valmiki's insistence she finally makes her appearance at the court but is asked by Rama to furnish another proof of her fidelity, she prefers to ask Mother Earth for asylum. Her lament towards the end of the work moves the reader to tears.

So predominant is the local colour in *Prakash Ramayana* that even the names of the characters have been changed according to their local pronunciation. Thus, Kaikeyee becomes 'Keekee', Jatayu 'Jatayan', Sampati 'Sampath', Indrajit 'Indrajeth' and so on. At many places in the work we find the contemporary feudal society of Kashmir and its ways reflected in quite an interesting manner. The guests attending Rama's wedding are shown attired in clothes of satin and brocade. People amuse themselves with *narud*, a game of dice played in the 19th century Kashmir, and *sedasta*, a card game popular among the upper class gentry of the times. On the arrival of Rama and Sita in Ayodhya after their marriage, the poor and the Brahmins are given so much in charity that they are "pressed under the weight of the gold". Astrologers are consulted for ascertaining the auspicious hour when Sugriva is anointed as king. Using Prakasharama's words, "Sugriva becomes the 'Shah', Angad the 'Wazir', and Hanumana the 'Peshkar'. As for Jamvant, he is riddled with tremendous responsibilities and is made the 'Kotwal' (the highest police officer) of the kingdom."

There are places where the poet appears to be referring to the atrocities committed on the Kashmiri Pandits during the horrible Afghan rule over Kashmir when it was order of the day to destroy their sacred threads. "Be a Brahmin and wear the sacred thread", Narada advises Hanumana. It is because of such features and peculiarities that

Prakash Ramayana has won a place in the hearts and minds of the common Kashmiri masses.

Characterization: Interplay between the Divine and the Human

Though the spiritual symbolization attached to the main characters and the allegorical interpretations of the events do not leave much space open for Prakashram to delineate individual traits and idiosyncrasies, he has shown artistic ingenuity in balancing the celestial and human aspects of their personalities. Within the constraints imposed upon him by concepts like *avatara* (incarnation) and *lila* (divine play), he has remarkably tried to develop them by placing them in situations where they are confronted by the problem of moral choice and crucial decision. Thus Rama, the divine hero with unrestricted will, also takes up variously the roles of Dasharatha and Kaushalya's son, Bharata and Lakshmana's brother, Sita's husband, Ravana's implacable foe and ideal ruler for the people of Ayodhya, besides the protector of the devotees and redeemer of mankind. While stressing on his superhuman exploits as God incarnate, Prakashram portrays the human side of his character with great sensitivity. What leaves the greatest imprint on our minds about him is his "unruffled equanimity" in all situations. One day Dashratha announces that Rama will be anointed as the king and the next day bowing to Kaikeyee's tantrums he banishes him to the forest for fourteen long years. But without losing his poise and without any trace of hesitation or regret, Rama accepts his fate, foregoing all the glory, splendour and pre-eminence that was to be his and saves his father the embarrassment of not keeping his word. His unequivocal assent shines out in the entire narrative most brilliantly. Taking tearful leave of his parents, and allowing an insisting Lakshmana and Sita to accompany him only after trying his best to dissuade them, he leaves for the forest but there another tragedy befalls him – he learns of Dasharatha's death and is stricken with grief like any human. Rama's imaginary conversation with his dead father in this hour of grief is one of the most moving passages in *Prakash Ramayana*. Here are some lines from it in loose translation:

I would say: But how did all this happen?
Oh, how deeply grieved I am!
He would say: Look, I know your clothes are drenched with your tears.
I would say: I left my home and what terrible things have happened.
He would say: But home is where one finds happiness and comfort.
I would say: Ah, what can a man who has lost his father do?
He would say: Remember that God is everywhere.

And inside the outer shell of divinity we see a human heart beating. When Ravana abducts Sita, we again find Rama distraught with sorrow, "shedding blood instead of tears" and asking the stars in the sky about her whereabouts. The dye is thus cast with his great battle with Ravana. We see him in a similar inconsolable state of mind when Lakshmana loses his consciousness on being struck by an arrow during a fierce battle with Indrajit. Nothing much uncommon here except the folkloric touch peculiar.to Prakashram.

Hanumana arrived with a message for me
Hail, hail, O Rama of high status!
Said he (Hanumana): Shri Rama is coming to you himself
Days of separation are over now
This much was enough for me
Five days passed and had I committed a sin?
God knows what was whispered in his ears and by whom?
He rendered me pinionless;
I withered away in the bud
Lakshmanji came again to hoodwink me
I was to be taken off to the woods
He left me there alone ...
Darkness overtook me at noon...
That day my star Brihaspati was in ascendancy
It was dead of night
I gave birth to Lava and Kusha
All my regrets came to an end ...
Even then you did not desist from taunting me, my darling Sir,
You shot an arrow at my breast ...
Which came out no doubt, from my back
What indeed has destiny written upon my brow?
Why otherwise should I have suffered all the calumny?
Into the Earth shall I descend
Let earth become cropper.

(Trs.: Prof. P.N. Pushp)

This tale of Sita's woe underlines the suffering and struggle of a woman in a world dominated by patriarchal rules. Interestingly, the place where Sita enters the chasm in the earth is given in *Prakash Ramayana* as Shankarpura – a village in the vicinity of Srinagar.

Prakashrama's portrayal of Lakshmana in his Ramayana conforms to his traditional image presented in other Ramayana works also, with slight variations here and there. His

loyalty to his elder brother, his ascetic self-denial, his valour, his fiery temperament (though not as fiery as it is in some other works on the Rama-theme) – everything has been brought out in a way that endears him to the common reader. His pious anger flares up at the slightest hint of injustice as, for example, in the episode of Rama's exile. His first impulse on hearing the news of Rama's banishment is to forcibly prevent Dasharatha from carrying out his unjust order, but later, on being restrained by Rama from doing anything rash, he insists on accompanying Rama to the forest – a request he finds difficult to reject. We do not find Prakashrama's Lakshmana reacting as strongly to Parshurama's provocations during Sita's *swayamvara* as in the *Ramacharitamanasa* (in some versions of the work, the episode does not occur at all), but his outspokenness appears to be as conspicuous here as in any other Ramayana. When Rama decides to banish Sita to the forest, Lakshmana openly accuses his elder brother of heartlessness and tells him that he has lost his sense of justice. Compelled to obey Rama's command, he takes the innocent Sita to the forest with a heavy heart and leaves her there with tears swelling in his eyes. Finding it impossible to face her and witness her totally undeserved suffering, he goes away from the spot on the pretext of getting some water for her to drink. His inner conflict and near rebellion against his elder brother's injustice, who quite ironically is also his ideal, has been well brought out by Prakashram. However, his image as a valorous side hero does not quite impress in the description of his acts on the battlefield, particularly his fight against Indrajit. The poet has presented him as an incarnation of Sheshanaga, but this aspect too has not been stressed much.

Hanumana's portrayal in *Prakash Ramayana* is of great human interest, although he has been presented as "Halmat Ladar", an incarnation of Rudra. He appears throughout the work as an embodiment of "valour, wisdom and heroism", bringing hope and cheer to those in desperate situations and carrying out impossible missions which no one else can accomplish. When the mission of Sugriva and his monkeys to find Sita is about to fail, he, awakened to his great power by Jamavanta, appears on the scene as hope personified. Crossing the vast sea in one great leap, he brings the much awaited news about Sita and lifts the pall of doom that had descended over everyone. After meeting Sita and consoling her, he offers to carry her back to Rama, a proposal that Sita does not accept as that would mean a reflection on Rama's prowess. He then mocks at Ravana and his might right in his court and sets the "golden" Lanka on fire with his burning tail. And when Lakshmana lies unconscious on the battlefield on being wounded by Indrajit, it is Hanumana who accomplishes the near impossible feat of bringing the Sanjivini herb to revive him, relieving an inconsolable Rama from his grief. All these are familiar episodes of the Rama-story, but Prakashrama's treatment makes them very appealing for the common reader. Prakashram's Hanumana achieves even a greater feat by killing Mahiravana and bringing his masters, Rama and Lakshmana, back on his shoulders from the nether world

where they had been abducted to. Here by a masterly touch of imagination, Prakashrama makes Hanumana meet Makradhwaja, who turns out to be his own son. Both the father and the son are swayed by affection after coming to know each other's identity. This tender side of the valiant hero's personality, a most unlikely father, is revealed in no other Ramayana. *Prakash Ramayana*, no doubt, presents Hanumana as an ideal devotee of Rama, but he is also something more than that – a most loveable character whose human qualities like courage, heroism, leadership, intelligence, selflessness, concern for another's distress, discrimination, endear him to every reader.

Prakashrama's Ravana is a valiant anti-god symbolizing the forces of *adharma* or evil – a perfect foil to Rama who symbolizes *dharma*. He is arrogant, self-conceited, egoistic, wrathful, drunk with power, and more than anything else, lustful. He has subdued all the gods, who lie in great fear of him as do the *rishis* and hermits whose penance he disturbs and homas he disrupts. It is lust and arrogance that ultimately prove his undoing. Yet he has his qualities too and like Milton's Satan we find ourselves secretly sympathizing with him at times, for instance, when we see Hanumana disrupt his yajna by abusing Mandodari and thus forcing him to leave it incomplete. And also when he obtains the Makkeshwara linga from Shiva whose great devotee he is – and is cheated by Narada of it. He is shown to be a diplomat too – he tries to incite Angad against Rama by asking him to avenge his father's death. Similarly, he writes a letter to Sugriva offering him a pact of friendship. Ravana is thus not shown to be all villainous and contemptible. Even Rama recognizes his great scholarship and wisdom and sends Lakshmana to him to pay him tributes and learn something from him in his dying moments. In his heart of hearts Ravana is also shown to be a devotee of Rama – a unique feature of *Prakash Ramayana*. He prays to Rama for deliverance from sin for he knows that "one who recites the name of Shri Rama shall dwell in Vaikuntha" and says, "I (Ravana) have all the faith in you". "O Lord", he prays, "remove the darkness of my mind and fill it with your divine light, for the person enlightened by you can have no worry at all". This is how Prakashram endows even Ravana with a redeeming feature.

Other Kashmiri Poetic Works on the Rama-Story

Prakasharama seems to be convinced that the Rama-story is the gateway to deliverance. While his contribution to the Ramayana literature in Kashmiri is immense, there are several other poets also whose works deserve to be noted. These, the authors of *Shankar Ramayana*, *Ananda Ramayana*, *Vishnu Pratap Ramayana*, *Sharma Ramayana*, *Tarachand Ramayana* and *Amar Ramayana* – mention could be made of Lakshman Kaul 'Bulbul's' *Ramagita* as well – have their own individual merit and place. Unfortunately, these works are still in manuscript form due to which their readership has been very limited. They

need to be properly worked upon and published for a better assessment of their literary worth. Here we will have a brief look at them:

Shankar Ramayana

Chronologically, the *Shankar Ramayana* was written before Prakashrama's Ramayana, in 1843 to be precise. Later in 1888, it was transcribed from Sharada into Devanagari characters. A voluminous work composed entirely in lyrical style in five volumes and 44 chapters, it gives the story from Rama's birth to his ascent to heaven with the lyrics having different refrains in different chapters and each one related to different episodes of the story – something akin to the *Gitavali* of Tulsidasa though in no way inspired by it. This stylistic characteristic gives *Shankar Ramayana* a separate place in the Ramayana literature of Kashmir.

The inspiration and influence of the *Valmiki Ramayana* and *Adhyatma Ramayana* can be clearly discerned in the work though. In the Shabari episode, the poet himself acknowledges the influence of *Adhyatma Ramayana*, which is also indicated by the intense devotion expressed by the poet for Rama and the space devoted by him to the glorification of his name. The story too has been presented in the form of a dialogue between Shiva and Parvati with a long *Shiva Charita* given in the beginning, wherein Sati takes the form of Sita and tests the divine nature of Rama when he is suffering the pangs of separation from Sita. Later she becomes free of doubt and apologizes from both Rama and Shiva. There is such a profusion of the spirit of Bhakti in *Shankar Ramayana* that it shows Rama taking birth in a four-armed form with the gods showering flowers on him. On Rama's wedding also all the gods, including Brahma and Shiva, take part in the celebrations and show reverence to him.

Another feature of *Shankar Ramayana* is the predominance of local colour as in *Prakash Ramayana*. The poet has introduced local elements in his description of nature, narration of incidents and depiction of the characters' feelings, making it easy for an average Kashmiri reader to identify himself with them.

Ananda Ramayana or *Ananda Ramavatra Charit*

The *Ananda Ramavatra Charit*, which is also known as *Ananda Ramayana*, was written by Anand Ram Razdan in 1888. Although the poet has followed the convention of beginning the work with hymns and prayers in praise of the Guru, Ganesha, Shiva, Rama and Vishnu reclining on Sheshnaga, the work is not divided into *kandas* or books. Various high points of the story are indicated by sub-titles. Like his predecessor Prakashram, Ananda Ram has also incorporated lyrics and devotional songs as integral part of the narrative, many of them being written in the style of folk songs.

Starting his narrative with Rama's birth and concluding it with Sita's entry in to the earth, the poet introduces many new stories and thus shows his innovative and creative skill. The birth of Sita is one such episode wherein he shows Sita as Ravana's daughter following the Kashmiri tradition, but adds a story about Ravana's previous birth. According to the story, Ravana molests a beautiful woman in a previous birth, and she curses him that she will be born as his daughter in another birth and become the cause of his destruction and of his entire family. In the next birth Rishis hand over a pitcher of blood to Ravana that he gives to Mandodari to drink, thinking it to be ambrosia. This makes Mandodari pregnant, but alarmed by the forecast of astrologers Ravana causes her abortion and gets the foetus placed in a closed pot and buried in Janakpuri.

In another innovation, Ananda Ram shows Sita slaying Mahiravana, something we come across nowhere else. According to the account given in *Ananda Ramayana*, Sita describes Mahiravana's extraordinary powess before Rama. An infuriated Rama launches an attack on him at Uttarakhand but is defeated along with his entire army. On this, Sita first smiles and then assuming the form of Mahakali, slays Mahiravana, cutting all his nine heads one by one.

Ananda Ramayana betrays influences of other works also. For instance, the meeting of Rama and Sita in the flower garden of Mithila and Ravana's humiliation on not being able to break the bow are incidents based on the *Rama-charita-manasa*. The battle scenes in it are particularly impressive, giving an impression of the poet's descriptive skill. The battle between the armies of Rama and Ravana is shown to continue for nine days and has been described in great detail. One important deviation from the traditional story about Lakshmana's loss of consciousness is that it is Ravana and not Meghnada who shoots the fatal arrow at him. Ravana does so clandestinely when he finds Meghanada's position weakening in the battle. Ravana is also shown taking resort to magic or power to create illusion on several occasions as in *Prakash Ramayana*, with Rama of course defeating all his moves. The original manuscript in Persian and its copy were till the recent exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits with the poet's descendants in his village in Kashmir.

Vishnupratap Ramayana

From the point of view of poetic merit, Pandit Vishnu Kaul's (real name Vishambhar Nath) *Vishnupratap Ramayana* is the most significant work in Kashmiri on the Rama theme after the *Prakash Ramayana*. The work, as its title suggests, has been dedicated by the author to Maharaja Pratap Singh though, according to Abdul Ahad Azad's history of Kashmiri literature, he did not personally hand it over to the Maharaja as, being an ordinary teacher, he could have no access to his court. The Ramayana has been written

in the Persian script in two volumes and the author himself has given its date of composition as 1913.

The *Vishnupratap Ramayana* is a voluminous work running into 30,000 verses and 348 chapters, all the chapters being included in five *kandas* or books. The largest *kanda*, designated as the Vanavasa Kanda comprises 161 chapters, but it incorporates the Kishkindha Kanda and Lanka Kanda as well. Azad's view that the *Vishnupratap Ramayana* is a translation of Valmiki is not confirmed by facts, though it cannot be denied that it is mainly based on his great epic. The author has, however, made several additions and changes in the story, besides giving expression to his own views and ideas on bhakti, spirituality and ethical and moral issues at various places. There is a profusion of local elements in the poet's description of nature and social environment. In the *Ramalila Kanda*, he has even shown Rama going on a tour of Kashmir. In fact, we come across lively images of contemporary Kashmiri life in the work.

The body of the work has been considerably enlarged by including numerous side-stories and additions. It appears that Vishnu Kaul is not able to restrain himself from incorporating any and every tale that comes to his mind. For example, the story of Ganga's descent has been described in full detail from Sagara's sacrifice to Bhagiratha's successful penance. Similarly, we have the account of Dasharatha and Kaushalya's previous birth as Kashyapa and Aditi in which they obtain a boon from Vishnu that he will be born as their son in the next birth. After this, we have the sage Vasishtha explaining the purpose and significance of Rama's incarnation in detail. Again there is a long discourse between Vishvamitra and Vasishtha when the former comes to ask Dasharatha for sending Rama and Lakshmana with him to protect his yajnas from being disrupted by the *rakshasas* which so impresses Dasharatha that he sends the two brothers to accompany Vishvamitra without any hesitation.

At several places the *Vishnu Pratap Ramayana* has been influenced by the *Ramacharitamanasa* also. This influence can be discerned in the dialogue between Kaka-Bhushundi, the episode of the boatman Guha, the burning of Lanka, the slaying of Ravana, Trijata's dream about coronation of Vibhishana and a few other episodes. At a number of places the poet has given a different twist to the story by making changes in it independently. One such incident relates to Lakshmana's loss of consciousness where Sumitra is shown to be greatly perturbed on seeing a bad dream. As for Sita's birth, the *Vishnu Pratap Ramayana* gives a slightly different version of the story given in the *Ananda Ramayana*. It shows Mandodari conceiving after inhaling the stench coming from a phial filled with seven drops of blood of the seven rishis and after that repeats the story given in the *Prakash Ramayana*.

Conception of Rama as the Supreme Being and advocacy of human devotion to him is the dominant note of *Vishnu Pratap Ramayana*. But whenever Vishnu Kaul comes

down to the temporal plane from the exalted ground of Bhakti he gives a free expression to his poetic mind. His description of Sita's state of mind suffering the pangs of separation away from him in Ravana's Lanka is indeed moving. She is shown "shedding pearls-like tears" with even the birds and trees affected by her distress. Her heart is like "a lute with its strings all broken". The grief of Rama and Sumitra at Lakshmana's loss of consciousness has been described in words full of pathos. Ravana has been portrayed as a lonely and dejected figure after the loss of Meghanada and Kumbhakarana. These portrayals show Vishnu Kaul as a sensitive poet. Though the influence of *Prakash Ramayana* is all too evident in his work, the author of *Vishnu Pratap Ramayana* has his own place in the Kashmiri literature as a narrator of the Rama-story.

Sharma Ramayana

Pandit Nilakantha Sharma's *Sharma Ramayana* is considered as an important contribution to Kashmiri Ramakavya. Divided into eight *kandas*, this poetic work was completed by its author in 1926 after working on it for seven years. These *kandas* are designated as Bala Kanda, Ayodhya Kanda, Kishkindha Kanda, Sundar Kanda, Lanka Kanda, Uttar Kanda and Lava-Kusha Kanda. The poet himself has acknowledged that his work has been greatly inspired by Tulasi's *Ramacharitamanasa*. This influence is amply reflected in not only the choice of episodes but also in descriptions and dialogues with certain passages reading almost as translations as, for instance, the description of the rainy season in the Kishkindha Kanda where lines upon lines have been rendered into Kashmiri. The episodes which show a clear influence of Tulasi are the meeting of Rama and Sita in the flower-garden before their wedding; the breaking of Shiva's bow; the meeting of Rama and Sita with the sage Atri during their exile in the forest and Anusuya's advice to Sita on a faithful woman's duty towards her husband; the transformation of Pratapabhanu and his family into Rakshasas as a result of a curse and taking rebirth as Ravana and his brother Kumbhakarana, with his minister being born as Vibhishna; the episode of the boatman Guha; the Kakabhushundi-Garuda dialogue; and the Shabari episode. Yet it would be wrong to conclude that the entire work is a translation of Tulsi's opus. Even in these episodes, Nilakanth Sharma has shown flashes of poetic imagination and innovative skill by adding new elements and presenting his own viewpoint at several places.

Variations, changes and additions made by the author are also numerous, adding charm and interest to the narrative. Parvati's story has been incorporated as a part of the story of Rama, right from her birth to her marriage with Shiva, Rama and Hanumana are shown to meet and develop friendship during their childhood days. The episode of shadow Sita has been taken from the *Adhyatma Ramayana*. Rama asks Sita to make her abode in the fire till he extirpates the demons. Thereupon Sita enters the fire and Ravana abducts

a shadow Sita. After the *agni-pariksha*, the real Sita is restored to Rama. Portrayal of human emotions and feelings has been beautifully done at a number of places. Love and in its various aspects and nuances have been described quite effectively, though in a conventional manner. Sita's pangs of separation, Rama's distress and frantic search for her after her abduction, Rama's grief on Dasharatha's death and Lakshmana's unconsciousness all have been sensitively described. Even Mandodari's sorrow on Ravana's death is quite moving. She has been likened to "a frost-covered lotus" and her helpless and wretched state has been touchingly portrayed. Some of the battle scenes are very impressive. As for Sita's birth, *Sharma Ramayana* has followed Tulasidasa's version completely.

Tarachand Ramayana

The *Tarachand Ramayana* shows a deep influence of the *Ramacharitamanasa* and to some extent of the *Adhyatma Ramayana* also. Comprising eight *kandas* and 102 chapters, this narrative poem was written by Pandit Tarachand in 1927 in the familiar style of Kashmiri Ramayanas with lyrics incorporated in the text. Some episodes occurring in the *Sharma Ramayana* appear in *Tarachand Ramayana* also with some variations. Dasharatha and Kaushalya have been shown in this work as Manu and Shatarupa in a previous birth. Pratapabhanu takes birth as Ravana under a curse here too, but as the grandson of Pulastya. Child Rama feels drawn towards Hanumana and plays with him. Both purchase rubies from a ruby-seller. Here we find Vishnu and not Ravana molesting a young woman – the beautiful wife of the demon Jalandhara – who curses him that he shall take birth as a human being. As part of the curse, Jalandhara was to be born as Ravana and abduct the wife of Vishnu born as a man.

The Shabari and Nishadaraja episodes occur here also, borrowed obviously from the *Ramacharitamanasa*. About Sita's birth, the story of the pitcher filled with the Rishis' blood is repeated with the change that it is the Rishis instead of astrologers who warn Ravana that his death will be born in a pitcher. Thereupon Ravana gets the pitcher buried at Janakpur so that King Janaka, whom he considered to be his enemy, would die. The flow of the narrative is smooth and unhindered, and characterization impressive. Here too the local elements abound in the descriptions.

Amar Ramayana

The latest in this series of Kashmiri Ramayanas is the *Amar Ramayana*, which was written by Amarnath 'Amar' in 1940. In this Ramayana the narrative instead of being divided into *kandas* or chapters has sub-titles to indicate high points of the story. The

work appears to be influenced by the Gandhian philosophy and reformist ideology, with its emphasis on Harijan uplift and widow re-marriage as can be seen in the episodes of Shabari and Guha and Sugriva's marriage to Bali's widow Tara. Widow re-marriage, it may be noted, was a burning social issue for the Kashmiri Pandits those days. About Sita's birth, *Amar Ramayana* repeats the story given in *Ananda Ramavatarachirata*.

Other Works

Among the works based on the Rama-story in Kashmiri, mention must be made of Lakshman Kaul Bulbul's *Rama Gita*. In this work, Rama is shown giving instruction to Lakshmana on spiritual and moral matters and in this process the author also gives expression to his own philosophical views. He has also tried to incorporate the story of King Bhringa and the Brahman's curse in the narrative, but his focus on the narration of the story is not so sharp.

CHAPTER 18

Krishnajoo Razdan – Melodic Expression of Devotional Ecstasy

S.S. Toshkhani

After the initial gush of devotional fervour that found expression in the verses of Lalleshwari in the 14th century, the Bhakti tradition in Kashmiri poetry continued as a subterranean flow till it witnessed another upsurge in the 18th-19th century when it emerged as a distinct and significant trend in the works of the great *lila* poets and reached its high watermark in the haunting melodies of Krishnajoo Razdan. Like Lalleshwari, Krishnajoo translated his mystical experience into soul-stirring poetry that still enchants and sways Kashmiri minds with its lilting cadences. But while Lalleshwari's devotion is directed towards an impersonal God whom she calls Shiva and is based on the absolutely non-dualistic Shaiva philosophy of Kashmir, Krishnajoo Razdan's Bhakti correlates belief in a personalized God and an impersonal view of the Ultimate Reality. Like his great predecessor Paramanand, he looks to the Vaishnava Bhakti movement of North India with its concepts of *avatara* and *lila* also for inspiration even as he tends to explain things in terms of both the Vedantic and the Kashmir Shaivite interpretation of reality. Placing Bhakti over every other mode of worship, he tries to reconcile its philosophical and emotive aspects, regarding them as two different but not opposite strands of its spectrum. But what distinguishes Krishnajoo from all other devotional poets of Kashmir is his highly developed consciousness of verbal music and his great sensitivity to acoustic values which contribute to the tremendous appeal that he continues to have among the Kashmiri people. In fact it can be claimed without any shadow of doubt that he is the

most musical of all Kashmiri lyricists. Suffused with intense devotion towards both Shiva and Krishna as their prime creative impulse, Krishnajoo Razdan's songs present a unique blend of music and poetry which penetrates our auditory channels and touches the innermost recesses of our hearts, transporting us to great heights of spiritual ecstasy. In this he seems to have no equal in not only Kashmiri Bhakti poets, but entire array of lyricists in the language, challenging even Rasool Mir, the great romantic Ghazal writer of the 19th century.[1]

Krishnajoo was born in the idyllic village of Vanapoh in Kashmir, not far from the national highway that links Srinagar and Jammu, in the year 1850. He came of a well to do family of landholders, his father Ganesh Raina owning large rice fields gifted to him by the Dogra ruler of his times for his meritorious services. Surely the natural charms of his little native village with its lush-green rice-fields, gushing streams, pine forests and more than anything else the snow-covered majestic peaks of the surrounding Pir Panjal mountains must have contributed to the development of the poet in Krishnadas, the name that he was given by his parents at his birth. It is said that his poetic talents found their first expression during early childhood when he had an astonishing mystic experience. According to the episode often related in his biographical sketches, his parents were greatly devoted to the goddess Ragnya, regarded as a manifestation of the Divine Mother by the Kashmiri Hindus and one of their most popular deities, whose temple was situated in the nearby village of Manzgam. On a *Jyeshtha Ashtami* day when the annual religious fair was held at the temple to celebrate the deity's appearance, they too decided to visit the temple to worship the deity. Leaving quietly for the pilgrimage, they kept the child Krishna and his sister at home with the servant as they were too small to travel the distance on foot. But Krishna some how came to know about it and started crying inconsolably, all attempts by the servant to mollify him proving futile. After crying for long the boy fell deeply asleep and in his dream he saw a kind and affectionate goddess approach him and wipe his tears. Taking him into her lap the goddess gave him a cup of *khir* to eat, some grains of which remained sticking to his mouth. When his parents returned they were surprised to hear about the divine vision from their young son. It is said that on waking up Krishna uttered a few lines in praise of the goddess – and that was his first poem!

Krishnajoo was very sensitive as a boy and would feel very happy to accompany his father Ganesh Raina, a deeply religious person, during his frequent visits to itinerant Sadhus who came to their village. He loved to spend hours with them, listening to their discourses and God talk, often feeling reluctant to leave their company. It was especially the *bhajans* they sang that would make him feel ecstatic. These were the moments he most relished in his childhood, about which not much is known to us. It was probably in association with these wandering holy persons that seeds of Bhakti sprouted in his

heart, their devotional songs firing his poetic imagination. Sensing his son's precociousness and proclivities, Ganesh Raina decided to give Krishnajoo the finest possible education he could think of so that his latent faculties would fully unfold. He made arrangements for the best tutors to give him tuitions at home in the subjects that were generally studied those days, including Sanskrit and Persian languages besides the religious lore. On his own too Krishnajoo studied a lot to satisfy his craving for knowledge.

Krishnajoo grew up to be a man of culture and refined aesthetic sensibility, reveling particularly in poetry and religious philosophy. Devotional melodies now started pouring out from his throat in an uninterrupted flow, enthralling the listeners with their sonority. People started gathering around him in large numbers attracted by the lilting cadencies of his songs addressed to popular deities, particularly Shiva, Krishna and the Mother Goddess. With his creative imagination drawing deeply from the eternal reservoir of Bhakti, Krishnajoo Razdan's fame soon traveled beyond the boundaries of his native place as a composer of strikingly beautiful songs full of passionate love of God and religious wisdom. He also took rapid strides towards his spiritual quest making Bhakti as his full time career and spurning the pleasures of the senses even while living the life of a householder.

According to his great grandson Pandit Shyamlal Razdan, he took Pandit Mehtab Kak of Ali Kadal, Srinagar as his guru. Before long Pandit Mehtab Kak became greatly fond of Krishnajoo Razdan for his exceptional poetic talent and often expressed the admiration he felt for him. Krishnajoo's growing popularity made one of his co-disciples so jealous that he went to the guru and accused Krishnajoo of plagiarizing his poems. The guru understood everything but kept silent, deciding to bring out the truth at a suitable time. One day the guru, Pandit Mehtab Kak, took all his disciples, including Krishnajoo, for an outing in a boat on the Dal Lake. And as they were enjoying the scenic beauty, he suddenly asked Krishnajoo to recite an instant poem on the lake. And then and there flowed from his sonorous throat verse upon verse of what has come to be regarded as one of his best and most popular poems:

"I've come to know the world – it's without any real essence /
Do not be deluded, just enjoy the lotuses blooming inside your consciousness //

The beauty of the poem lies in its long string of spiritual metaphors which on one level of meaning refer to the sights and scenes of the lake and on the other carry spiritual connotations. The poem stunned everyone and silenced the jealous co-disciple whose lies stood exposed, mightily pleasing the guru who was already convinced of Krishanjoo's great genius as a poet.

Krishnajoo Razdan lived and wrote at a time when Kashmir had just passed into the hands of Dogra rulers but the horrors and holocausts of the barbarous Afghan rule were

still haunting the memories of Kashmiri Hindus. Though things had started looking up for them, fear was so deeply embedded in their hearts that they sought shelter in devotion to a benign and compassionate personal God who protects the pious and upholds the cosmic order. This was but a natural tendency which found expression in Kashmiri Bhakti poetry, or *Lila* poetry as it is more popularly called, with Paramanand, Prakash Ram Kurigami and Krishnajoo Razdan as its foremost representatives. Krishnajoo was thus very much a product of the historical and cultural climate of his times, giving hope to a long suppressed and persecuted people of deliverance from existential miseries through devotion to God and obtaining his divine grace.

Poetry came as naturally to Krishnajoo Razdan as leaves to trees. His verbal artistry that was astonishingly effortless and the sheer magic that he created through the music of assonance, alliteration, internal and end rhyme and the delightful cadence of Kashmiri syllables and letters reminds one of the great Sanskrit poet Jayadeva, with whom he can be compared for his refined sense of beauty. He continued to enrich his native language with his sweet symphonies of devotional verse from the time he was twenty-one till he breathed his last in the year 1926 at the age of 76. When Krishnajoo Razdan started to make his presence felt in Kashmiri literary world as a young poet, Paramanand was at the peak of his glory as an outstanding writer of *Lila* poetry. One cannot say whether or how far Krishnajoo was influenced by him, but some faint echoes can be heard here and there in a few poems of the younger poet. It is said that the two saint-poets once met in the pilgrimage town of Mattan and Krishnajoo sought and received Paramanand's blessings. Many things appear to be common between the two as religious poets yet there are great differences between them, both having their own distinct idiom and expression, their own accent and tone, their own diction and style, their own ways with words, their own areas of experience and imagination. Whereas Paramanand's poetry is considered to be anchored in more profound and subtle intellectual moorings and his narrative skills sharper and more impressive, Krishnajoo Razdan is par excellence the poet of musical exuberance, his creative imagination soaring to more fascinating skies. Like the immensely popular Maithili poet Vidyapati, he adores both Shiva and Krishna as objects of his passionate devotion, invoking them in soulful melodies. What is greatly interesting is that in his famous oeuvre *Shiva Lagna*, we have most beautiful songs of Rasa and Krishna's dalliance with Radha and the Gopis alongside rapturous lyrics hailing the communion of Shiva and Shakti.

Krishnajoo Razdan was prolific in giving expression to his mystic attachment for a loving God, call him Shiva or Krishna, and pouring out his innermost feelings in relation to Him in hundreds of hymnal lyrics or *lilas* as they are called in Kashmiri, besides his major narrative work the *Shiva Lagna*. He also composed a number of longer poems which appeal to moral instincts and piety and impart spiritual wisdom as well as provide solace and succour to the common man in the rough and tumble of life. Looking at life

with the eyes of a detached person who has turned his back to the world and its pleasures and is at the same time deeply attached to God as an infinite source of love and compassion, Krishnajoo Razdan creates a charming chiaroscuro effect in his poems. Sadly, except for a few facts some of which we have related above, not much is known about the life of this outstanding saint poet. We have virtually no authentic biography of his, not even his direct descendents or descendents of his disciples having cared to come out with anything more solid than some scattered anecdotes of hagiographical nature. As for a worthwhile bibliography on him, we have none. Decades back a Srinagar publisher, Ali Mohammad and Sons brought out a collection of his poems, including the epic *Shiva Lagna,* in the Persian script under the title *Harihar Kalyan,* but it was full of defects and Krishnajoo himself was not satisfied with it. About the same time George Grierson edited his *Shiva Lagna* and got it published as *Shiva Parinaya* by the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal in the Devanagari script with a Sanskrit translation by Pandit Mukund Ram Shastri but it hardly reached the common reader. Prof. S.K. Toshkhani too published a series of his selected devotional lyrics in the form of a series of booklets titled *Shri Krishna Vani* in the early 1930s. It was not till 1984, however, that a standard edition of his complete works, prepared by the poet-scholar Somnath Vir, was made available by the Jammu and Kashmir Academy for Art, Culture and Languages in the Persian script for the readers. Vir painstakingly collated various available manuscripts while editing the works critically with a detailed introduction. Later its revised edition was also brought out with some changes and incorporating additional material. Fortunately, for those interested in reading him in the Devanagari script, the saint-poet's great-grandson Pandit Shyam Lal Razdan[2] published his complete works in three volumes titled *Krishna Darshun*, *Shiva Lagna* and *Krishna Vani* in 1996, 1998 and 2000 respectively, fulfilling a long felt demand.

A majority of people, however, slaked their thirst for the enrapturing poems of this great and most musical Kashmiri saint-poet through oral transmission, with his disciples and the repertoires of popular singers playing an important role in their propagation. It was a usual practice for his disciples to hold marathon sessions for singing his *Lila* or devotional lyrics which often lasted nightlong and continued till the wee hours, with the audience, which joined the chorus, finding itself transported to great heights of devotional ecstasy. These sessions were a transforming experience for the participants and can be described as a democratic sharing of the poet's text by his audiences. Most prominent among those who sang the *lilas* was the saint-poet's closest disciple Pandit Kanthjoo Sharabi who lived in a locality in central Srinagar known as Kanya Kadal and who had an exceptionally melodious voice. Krishnajoo Razdan would often come all the way from Vanpoh to his house to participate in these sessions. While these moments when he was present amongst them were heavenly for the disciples, Krishnajoo too would be ecstatic to be with them. The music not only opened floodgates of joy for them, it was also their way of pleasing the deity they were devoted to – a part of their *sadhana*. And it was in

this manner that Krishnajoo Razdan became phenomenally popular even during his lifetime with his songs on everyone's lips and reached everyone's heart in Kashmir. Today his popularity has soared even further as his compositions act as a spiritual balm to the wounded psyche of the distressed and dispersed community to which he belonged which in its present state of depression is despondently looking to God for refuge. It must not be forgotten that Krishnajoo was writing in an age when the Bhakti movement had lost much of its steam in North India, but in Kashmir it was witnessing a new upsurge with the great *Lila* poets like Paramanand breaking ground for re-linking Kashmiri poetry with the mainstream of Indian literary tradition in a way that it looked a fresh and regenerating trend. Krishnajoo Razdan contributed tremendously to these efforts by adding new dimensions to it.

Bhakti for Krishnajoo Razdan is man's constant awareness of the living presence of God in everything and everywhere and the need to cultivate a personal relationship with him. It is a *bhava* or a feeling, a state of mind, a "matter of emotion" that satisfies the human craving for a supreme personality who can be adored and to whom prayer can be addressed.[3] It is not just the central perceptive element of Krishnajoo Razdan's creative genius – it is his entire philosophy of life, the warp and woof of his existence, reflecting his world-view, his anguish at the harshness of the human condition, his concern at the entrapment of man in the illusory world of the senses, his warning about the perverseness of mind. That is why he regards it to be the precious thing one can acquire – a string of pearls for which the highest price must be paid:

O wise buyer! My pearls are not the stuff
you can buy cheaply from the market
They're real, not fake in any way
Considering them so would be highly naïve
They're of the highest value

At another place he uses the same metaphor to present Bhakti as the only alternative that can help man get rid of existential dilemmas. Man, he says, has the freedom of choice to wear or not to wear the string of pearls that *bhakti bhava* is as the most precious possession of life:

The choice is yours
You are free to wear this string of pearls called *bhakti*
(Or not to wear it)
You have the freedom to act
Go on, make your choice
There is no compulsion!

He does not reject life or the everyday world as such – in fact he takes all his imagery from it – but is more than convinced that *bhakti bhava* alone can be instrumental in helping man to grasp the reality that is beyond the phantasmagoria of names and forms and realizing his true self. It is only *bhakti*, he feels, that pleases God in the ultimate analysis and takes one near God, and for that surrender of ego and sincerity and simplicity of mind are the essential pre-requisites:

Tothān chhukh tsúy sedyan ta sādan
Pamposhú pādan vondayo pān
[You are pleased with those alone who are straightforward and guileless. I devote myself to your lotus feet, O Lord!]

Loving devotion for God flows as an overpowering current of emotion or *bhava* in Krishnajoo Razdan and it is with this *bhava* that he hails his chosen deity in one of his most popular songs *byal tay maadal vyana gulaab pamposha dastay* – his whole body and soul consumed by devotional fervour. "It is with intense *bhakti bhava* that we hail you O Lord Shiva! We offer you posies and posies of *bel* (wood-apple leaves), *maadal* flowers, scented *vyana*, roses and lotus flowers."

Regarding *bhakti* as a *rahasyanubhava* or a mystic experience, Krishnajoo seeks to cultivate an intimate emotional relationship with God. He believes God to be the saviour and ultimate refuge of devotees, someone unto whom one can surrender and whom one can love and depend upon. In poems that appear to resemble the *vinaya pads* or poems of petition and supplication of North Indian, especially Hindi, Bhakti poets like Surdas, he implores Shiva to save him from the menacing storms and the raging fires that he has to confront bare handedly:

My boat is caught in a raging storm
Rocked by waves in the midst of the ocean of existence
And you and you alone can take me across
In front of me there is a blazing fire
Behind me a heap of explosives
And placed between the two
I am supposed to carry on my work
Take pity on me O Shambhu, my Lord!

He is anguished by the existential condition and wary of the vicious entrapments of the world into which one can unsuspectingly fall. He calls upon God to free him from the tangle of *moha* and to dispel the gloom caused by innate ignorance:

I have fallen into the vicious trap that the world is
And my only hope lies with you

For you alone can free me from the tangle
O my eternal Lord, my Shiva!
Approaching you with an intense feeling of devotion
I am desperately searching for you on the Harmukh Mount
For you alone can dispel
The darkness of delusion, O Lord!

In poem after poem Krishnajoo Razdan proclaims his unqualified faith in Shiva as the compassionate Lord who can deliver the *bhakta* from the meaninglessness of life and lead him along the path of salvation. Presenting his plaint directly before the "ash-smeared ascetic" who provides shelter to those who are without protection, Krishnajoo depicts his condition in moving terms:

I have become like a lyre which sounds from outside
but is hollow inside
Musician, play your music on my chords
I am not far from you, Lord
though only a bubble in the endless ocean that you are
Oh, how close have I come to the edge of the sword
And yet how lost in the sleep of delusion
Who but you can wake me up from this slumber?

He implores, prays, begs God to extricate him from the woeful condition in which he finds himself. He does not even hesitate to complain to Him for having abandoned him, exercising his right as *bhakta*:

Why do you leave me to hear the taunts of fools?
Make me jump from place to place
Force me into a position of exile
Why don't you reveal your real disposition?
Why do you lull me into the sleep of ignorance?
Make me drunk with the wine of delusion
Why don't you wake me up with your conscious nudge?

Shocked by his painful predicament, all that Krishnajoo prays for is devotion, for the Lord to grant him his vision:

Come and show yourself to me
Take everything I have
Take back all that you have given me
But give me *bhakti*, give me *bhakti* alone!
Bhakti and nothing else!

Krishnajoo Razdan's concept of Bhakti is essentially emotion-centred or feeling centred, for he does not believe in intellectualizing it. In most of his poems we see him pining for God, expressing his intense longing to have communion with him, to surrender himself completely before his will. Pangs of separation make him desperate and distraught and he flails and cries and flounders in his quest. His mind is inflamed with passionate love for God – consumed by the fire of love to use his own metaphor:

I am a lily seared by the fire of love
Come quietly to me by the riverside
O you ascetic smeared with ashes!

Like most Bhakti poets he expresses his spiritual longing in terms of the "tormenting desire of the soul for the absent Beloved". In some of his most poignant poems we find him portraying himself as Radha or the Gopis waiting restlessly for Krishna for a rendezvous in gardens or meadows:

Radha I am waiting for Krishna to come
When he does I will offer my very life for him
Oh, how my heart has been stolen by the son of the cowherd Nanda!

Krishnajoo Razdan's poetry celebrates this loving relationship between the human soul and God at the highest aesthetic level as an experience that liberates one from the chains of ego. Such love is pure *bhava* or emotion that envelops one's being like pure fragrance wafting through the air; it is pure delight, pure ecstasy flying on the wings of poetry. It is this state of beatitude that the Gopis seek to attain through *Rasa* – the dance that signifies the merger of the finite with the infinite. That is why Krishnajoo holds them as models of selfless love, showing them giving their all for the bliss of dancing with Krishna with abandon. His sweet and mellifluous *Rasalila* songs are among the best written on the theme in any language. Here is how he describes their joyous whirl in one of his most beautiful *Rasa* songs:[4]

O come and let the dance be our delight
For when the Gopis' Lord began to dance
Six months had passed as though a single night!
The seasons watched enraptured in their trance
A month flew as an hour, a year a day
A thousand eras we will dance away!

[Trs.: Nila Cram Cook]

Krishnajoo depicts the state of Radha's and the Gopis' mind with the subtle strokes of a sensitive artist – they have lost the sense of time, the awareness of the body, the

consciousness of worldly ties as they rock with Krishna in the frenzy of the sensuous dance, thrilled by his touch, excited by his closeness. Krishnajoo elevates their love sport to the level of the highest spiritual experience. The erotic *Rasa* dance becomes an eternal affair ever taking place in the Vrindavan of the *bhakta*'s mind, transcending the limits of time and space:

Man myon Brindaban tú lo lo
Atma rūp Nārāyan tú lo lo!

[My own mind is Vrindavan / And my own self Narayan!]

And somewhere among these love-mad cowherd girls of Braja the poet feels his own enraptured self participating in the celestial event, identifying himself with them and Radha and forgetting the vain pursuits of worldly happiness:

I too would dance with you in the ring, O Lord
Thinking myself to be Radha!

These songs have the element of *rahasyanubhava* or mystical experience about them, a state of beatitude in which the seeker feels himself dissolved in God as "an endless sea of beauty, joy and love". Their appeal is irresistible and universal, sweeping away all barriers of sectarian or cultic allegiance – and this marks Krishnajoo Razdan's approach to Bhakti. One is amazed at the ease with which he, an ardent devotee of Shiva, enters the world of *Krishnalila*, feeling equally drawn to both Shiva and Krishna. Nor does he differentiate between them and Rama or the Mother Goddess for that matter, showing the same devotional enthusiasm in singing paeans to them. Refusing to take any doctrinaire position in this regard, he tries to synthesize diverse devotional currents, subsuming all deities in his conception of the Ultimate Reality. Some of his sweetest lyrics expressing devotion for Krishna alternate with his most enchanting songs addressed to Shiva. In one such beautiful song the idea of oneness of Shiva and Krishna is expressed through a unique image of early dawn in which the dark hue of the night, which resembles the colour of Krishna, is inseparable from the white colour of the morning, the complexion of Shiva:

He whose complexion is dark as the night (Krishna)
Has come to our home with morning in his arms (Shiva)
How beautiful they look together like the white and black of the pupil of the eye!

Shiva Lagna, the poet-saint's magnum opus, is replete with images emphasizing of non-duality between Shiva and Vishnu, as also many of his miscellaneous poems. In turn he identifies these two personal deities with *Nirguna Brahma* – the one transcendent

principle pervading the whole universe which reveals itself as Self-luminous Reality. In one of his poems he says:

He is self-luminous
But the eyeless are not aware of it
Like the bat who can't see in daylight

Though Krishnajoo Razdan understands *bhakti* as cultivation of an emotional and personal relationship with God, as we have pointed out earlier, he does not exclude *jñāna* from its conception that he has in mind. He views *bhakti* in conjunction with *jñāna*, finding no contradiction between the two as for him both go hand in hand and complement each other. The Vaishnava Acharyas, Ramanuja, Madhva, Nimbarka and Vallabha also endorse this position as does the Kashmir school of Shaiva philosophy with which Krishnajoo Razdan seems to have a close affinity of thought. His attitude towards the relationship between *bhakti* and *jñāna* appears also to be influenced by the Bhagvad Gita in which Krishna explains that *bhakti* is not devoid of *jñāna* nor is *jñāna* devoid of *bhakti*. Thus, at the end of the 18th chapter we have him saying:

By means of devotion he (the aspirant) will know what I really am
And then knowing me, will become one with me.

Krishnajoo Razdan considers knowledge to be essential for devotion, for when knowledge dawns devotion too gets deepened. He prays to the Guru, therefore, to give him the vision of true knowledge:

Give me the vision of true knowledge
With oneness of mind bring me closer to yourself
O Satguru, shown me the light in this darkness

A *bhakta* is also a *jñānī*, he believes, and then proceeds to describe the characteristics of a *jñānī*–*bhakta*, devoting a whole poem to it. In the long poem titled "Characteristics of a *Jñānī*", he defines a *jñānī* as:

One who desires *moksha*, knows his true self
One whose ignorance has been dispelled
Know that person's body as the sacred Kashi
One whose mind is immersed in God-consciousness
One who is dead even while he lives
One who always remembers the dying moment
The fortunate person who shows loving devotion towards God
He who does not believe that the One has a second
Know him alone to be a *jñānī*—a man of knowledge

These lines clearly show that not only does Krishnajoo Razdan see knowledge of the self as related to the love of God; he also finds no contradiction between Bhakti and the monistic view of God. God is infinite love himself and knowing that leads to loving devotion for him, which in turn leads to liberation. Bhakti results in the feeling of oneness and identification with the object of devotion, and it is this feeling that helps the seeker to grasp the Ultimate Reality. To quote Prof. Daya Krishna, "there is always an element of feeling associated with reasoning, but for the attainment of Mukti, it is Bhakti that takes us forward."[5]

The philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism, which had a great influence on Krishnajoo Razdan, as did Advaita Vedanta, goes a little further and says that more than just feeling, Bhakti is Shakti itself. This Shakti, according to Prof. Shiva Kumar Sastry, "is introduced into mind for its own betterment, for its spiritual uplift." Sastry further adds: "For the purpose of creation, Shiva-Shakti manifests itself in the form of the world. This is the *pravritti* of Shakti. For the purpose of liberation, Shakti becomes Bhakti in the mind of the devotee and the dawn of Shakti in man is the dawn of Bhakti in him. So it is technically called by Shaivites as *shaktipata*. It is through this *shaktipata* that a *sadhaka* begins his journey."[6] Call it Bhakti or Shakti, what helps in attainment of liberation is the divine grace itself or *anugraha* to which Krishnajoo Razdan refers again and again:

Atmabodh kulisuy chu dayi anugraha mūl
[The tree of self-awareness has god's grace as its root]

But without Bhakti one cannot have *anugraha* or God's grace and without *anugraha* there can be no *moksha*, which for Krishnajoo is the goal he most aspires to attain. Like Surdas he makes Gopis lash out at Uddhava for asking them to take to the dreary path of *jñāna* and abandon *bhakti*:

Say Gopis to Uddhavaji: Stop this sermonizing!
Stop telling us about this dry *jñāna* of yours
It is *bhakti* alone by which *mukti* can be attained

But for receiving God's grace, one must first dissolve ego and surrender before his will completely. This is what Chaitanya and the Vaishnava Acharyas also stress upon as an important pre-condition for obtaining the capacity to love Krishna. They call love the *āhlādinī shakti* or the "joy giving power" of Krishna himself, for he appears to the devotee in the form of love. This is *prema bhakti*, which Krishnajoo celebrates in his poems, holding Gopis as the ideal to emulate. It is a state in which the self seeks complete merger or absorption in God as the embodiment of love so that there remains no distance or difference between the two. In the words of the poet:

Búy-búy trävith path rozi tsúy-tsúy
[Giving up ego-centeredness, there remains God-consciousness alone]

Krishnajoo Razdan thus appears to regard knowledge and reason as subservient to devotional values, to whole-hearted and intense love for God. In fact, he does not differentiate between the two but tries to reconcile them by stressing that both of them together lead to mystic realization, knowledge without love being sterile and therefore of no avail. Those who pursue the path of knowledge find satisfaction in perceiving God as an ineffable and formless Being, impersonal and without any attributes. In the *bhakta*'s imagination, God is a person with whom an emotional relation can be cultivated, and not just an abstract principle. Krishnajoo Razdan with his moorings in Kashmir Shaiva philosophy, however, does not see any contradiction between belief in a personal and determinate God and the idea of God as an impersonal and indeterminate Being. In his view God is personal and impersonal both, determinate and indeterminate, and yet transcending both. Krishnajoo reconciles the whole tangle by identifying Shiva and Krishna, his personal deities, with *nirguna, nirmala* and *nirakara* Brahman. This takes us to another aspect of Krishnajoo Razdan's concept of Bhakti – the relationship between God, Man and the World. Influenced deeply by the Triadic philosophy of Kashmiri Shaivites, he says that both Man and the World are identical with God, whom in his personal aspect he calls Shiva. It is Shiva who manifests himself as the phenomenal world. He is the all-pervading consciousness vibrating in every atom of the universe. There is no need therefore to look for him outside for what exists outside exists inside also. And if he is *nirguna* and *nirākāra* (formless and indeterminate), he is *saguna* and *sākāra* (having attributes and form) also. He is one and also many. To quote some of the poet's own verses:

You are doer, non-doer and un-doer as well
You are one and yet you are many
You are without any attributes, and yet your attributes
Redeem your *bhakta*s.
A bubble appeared on the surface of water
But is it really away from the ocean?
The bubble bursts and merges with water!

Brahman, the impersonal absolute Being is within me
But I lost my senses and looked for him outside
Like one who searches for his child in the whole town
When it is actually there in his own arms.

O you who are beyond Maya, without any beginning or end
Who can fathom your unfathomable depth?

O you who are infinite and inaccessible
Beginning of the beginning of things
Hear, oh hear my anguished cry!

Krishnajoo Razdan feels the presence of this indefinable, indescribable and unfathomable spirit everywhere but does not find any incompatibility between his belief in a personalized God and this immutable reality which has no name and no form for it reveals itself in infinite forms, as we have already pointed out. His attitude to Bhakti is flexible enough to accommodate polarities and seeming contradictions – reason and emotion, determinate and indeterminate, knowledge and devotion, immanence and transcendence. Behind it is his Shaiva conviction that everything is related to everything else and included in the all-encompassing totality of the absolute. We find him explaining abstractions and apparent paradoxes in terms of the oneness of consciousness that runs through all that exists.

It is the unity of Shiva and Shakti, the two cosmic principles representing transcendence and immanence, as one reality that forms the theme of Krishnajoo Razdan's magnum opus, the *Shiva Lagna*. Outwardly of course it tells the story of the marriage of Shiva and Parvati as narrated in the *Shiva Purana*, but actually it seeks to reflect in essence the monistic philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism which expounds the "absolute unity of Reality" and the oneness of the individual soul and Shiva. In fact, *Shiva Lagna* sums up his views about the relationship of God, Man and the World couched in Shaiva metaphysical terms and poetic metaphor. At one place in the work he clearly acknowledges that he is a follower of the Shaiva tradition:

I, Krishnajoo Razdan am a *Shivakarmi*, a follower of the Shaiva tradition
Meditating with focused mind on you, O Lord
I find every place to be your auspicious abode
O Sadashiva, I dedicate my whole self to you

At another place he clarifies that narration of Shiva and Parvati's marriage is but a pretext to sing the glory of the Lord of Shakti:

Whatever I sing is actually the glory of Shaktinatha, the Lord of Shakti
Though he is beyond Maya, the marriage is just a pretext to sing his praises

As a poetic work, *Shiva Lagna* is more a string of different songs and hymns than a narrative epic, much like Tulsidasa's *Kavitavali*. Each song is an independent unit standing by itself with the poet's interjections here and there. The narrative structure is loose and the storyline too weak, leaving very little scope for proper character delineation. Descriptions are also mostly sketchy and too trite to be impressive with a too heavy mythical-Puranic ambience making even potentially interesting situations look dull at

times. The poet follows only the broad outline of the story as given in the *Shiva Purana* and adds allegorical or metaphoric dimensions wherever possible to make the points he wants to from the spiritual perspective. After following the convention of showing reverence to Ganesha, the work begins with the episode of Daksha Prajapati's *yajña* to which all the gods have been invited except Shiva. Sati, his daughter comes uninvited and to express her anger at the insult shown by him to her husband commits self-immolation. Enraged Shiva sends Virabhadra to destroy the *yajña* and he cuts off Daksha's head, vandalizes the whole place and thrashes every god he could lay his hands upon. The terrified gods are shown praying to Shiva for protection with even Daksha singing hymn to appease him with a goat's head transplanted on his body. Shiva is pleased and the fire sacrifice comes to an end and with it the first part of the work. Nothing here is worthy to note except the interpretation that Daksha's behaviour indicates what havoc the rise of ego in an individual's mind can wreak.

The second part has three high points: Uma reborn as Parvati, the daughter of Himalaya, performs great penance to obtain Shiva as her husband; Shiva is pleased and grants her wish; the marriage of Shiva and Parvati takes place with the entire pantheon of gods participating in the celebrations. These are well known episodes of the Puraniç story about Shiva's wedding, but here Krishnajoo Razdan introduces several innovations and variations which are unique and make his poetry sparkle with new and lively dimensions. The narration is poor here too with even delicate aspects like Parvati's beauty and her passionate love for Shiva not described with enough sensitivity. But the innovative treatment that he gives to the episode of Shiva testing the steadfastness and firmness of Parvati's love is just superb. The way Parvati rebuffs the ascetic who was actually Shiva himself in disguise and the dialogue between the two has a folklorish appeal, simple but touching and marking an interesting departure from the artificiality of much of the Kashmiri *Mathnavi* poetry that was being written in his days. The same can be said about the episode of Parvati's mother Mina's sulk on seeing the bridegroom Shiva in the guise of an ascetic with ashes smeared on his whole body. Stunned and shocked at the sight of such horrible looking husband for her charming daughter, she cries boisterously and rolls on the ground. Suddenly festivities come to a standstill as she creates a scene. All attempts by her husband Himalaya, the sage Narada, her own daughter Parvati and others to console her fail. She flails her arms and tears her clothes and goes into a terrible sulk, admonishing her daughter for "pleading" for such a "hideous" groom. Mina looses her temper with Parvati when she tries to make her understand that he whom she calls a repulsive ascetic is actually "the highest reality in all the three worlds" (the sermon actually sounds too prudish and tedious on her part). Finally Narada is shown to save the situation by requesting Shiva to assume a more pleasing appearance. When Shiva obliges, an overjoyed Mina does a u-turn and profusely praises the new-look groom for his

handsomeness as the ladies burst into auspicious marriage songs on the beat of the Kashmiri hand-drum *tumbaknari* :

In a corner of our garden blooms a beautiful lotus flower
And lo a golden oriole has
Suddenly flitted into the bower!
The prince charming has come for our princess.

The whole song is actually very melodious and therefore impossible to translate, as are of the songs of the poet which resonate with music. What is greatly interesting is that a good number of songs in the work are addressed to Krishna who is shown accompanying the bridegroom's party as the *yajmāna* to receive the "gift of their daughter" (*kanyādāna*) from Parvati's parents, Himalaya and Minavati. And what is even more interesting is that some of these songs are about Krishna performing *Rāsa* with the Gopis and Radha and his dalliance with them, some of the most beautiful that the poet has written:

Nandlāl āv gindne rās āra kárive āray
[Nandalal has come to dance with us, make a ring, make a ring]

The episode that is perhaps really unique and most original in *Shiva Lagna* is about the golden snow that Shiva causes to fall when asked if he has brought some gold to give the bride as a return gift. What is gold, he asks ladies of Himalaya's household with seeming innocence. Is it as precious as food that sustains people? And then in a moment, golden snowflakes fall from the sky along with pearls and gems. At first astonished people can't believe their eyes. They come out of their homes with their spades and try to rake as much gold as possible from their courtyards and streets, storing it even in their barns and godowns. In an instant the wretched poor become rich and wealthy and all disparities seem to vanish. But the golden snow keeps on falling incessantly, accumulating in huge heaps reaching up to the balconies of their houses. Now it looks menacing, for with its heavy weight the roofs start caving in. People are afraid that excessive snowfall can be dangerous and want it to stop, realizing that material wealth alone does not bring happiness, maintaining of the nature's order is important. Being of gold the snow does not even melt, bewildering them further. Narada again comes to their rescue by requesting Shiva to stop the snowfall, which Shiva gladly does by scattering the clouds. The huge snow heaps which have blocked visibility are piled up to form the Sumeru mountain. Everything is hunky-dory again with Narada strumming merrily on his lute. The episode, which does not occur in any other work related to Shiva, seems to have been created by the poet to present Shiva's *aishvarya rūpa* or divine majesty. The nuptials over Shiva and Parvati leave for Kailasa with everyone singing hymns to them and the poet interpreting the whole episode in the metaphysical context of non-duality.

The marriage of Shiva and Parvati has been presented by Krishnajoo Razdan as a grand gala event which all the "three crore" gods of the Hindu pantheon including a whole host of local deities and the celestial maidens attend as wedding guests, resplendent in their majesty and beauty. The entire population of *Gandharvaloka* pours out enthusistically playing on all kinds of musical instruments to celebrate the happy occasion. How could the sages have afforded to be away from scene? They are present in all their strength – Krishnajoo mustering all the names that he could remember from the Puranas – and sit under the sandalwood trees to watch everything from a vantage point as it were. It is a star-studded extravaganza in which the humans and the gods, the spiritual and the mundane all mix and mingle and play their respective parts. Though Shiva is shown to proceed to 'Kashipur' for the wedding, the entire setting unmistakably points to Kashmir. The poet describes with joyous abandon all the ceremonies and customs in their minutest details showing them taking place in the typical Kashmiri Pandit manner exactly according to Kashmiri Pandit rituals and rites. And every ceremony is enlivened by ladies of Himalaya's household, celestial maidens and even goddesses with snatches of auspicious songs to welcome "the king of the three worlds" and his bride to be. At times the description appears to be boring and repetitive. But Krishnajoo Razdan is Krishnajoo Razdan, he does not miss any opportunity to give allegorical meanings to every event. In addition to ceremonies and rituals, the local colour is further intensified by the mention of Kashmiri musical instruments – the sitar, *santoor* and *tumbaknari* being all there – costumes, pilgrimage places (interestingly most of them came into existence in the medieval age), names of local gods and goddesses, geographical features like rivers and mountains and even gardens like the Shalimar which was laid out by the Mughals. It is the Kashmiri flowers that bloom in the *Shiva Lagna,* Kashmiri birds that warble.

Drawing on profuse local elements Krishnajoo introduces in *Shiva Lagna* shades of a folk-epic with symbols and metaphors derived from imagery generally used in folklore. Thus as in folksongs the poet calls the bride *här* and the bridegroom *poshinūl* or golden oriole, a girl longing to have a rendezvous with her lover is a *masval* or the riverside lily and so on. While this requires a separate discussion, it may suffice to say here that despite his proclivity for allegorizing, the soulful music of many of his *lilā*s or devotional lyrics is based on folk tunes, in particular the marriage songs. The fact is that basically Krishnajoo Razdan is a lyric poet. His creative genius does not find full and appropriate expression in the narrative genre, it dazzles when it flashes forth in lyrical expression. In *Shiva Lagna* too the lyrical urge is very strong, pouring out in the form of numerous devotional songs, hymns and prayers. It seems that he is waiting for a pretext to relegate narration to a back seat and give his imagination a free flight on the wings of a song. And although the space of the work is overcrowded with hymns and devotional songs and poems of supplication, he cannot help expressing himself in syrupy vocabulary and racy rhythms,

carefully using the internal music of Kashmiri words and syllables to create his magic. Acoustic values are his greatest strength as a poet. The hymns that abound in *Shiva Lagna* with everybody coming out with one at the drop of a hat eager to show devotion to Shiva or Keshava are no exception. Though too many of them sometimes cause tedium, it cannot be denied that they immensely enrich the texture of the narrative. Wherever he finds a gap the poet himself steps in singing a hymn or two in his own persona.

Apart from narrative poetry and hymnal lyrics, Krishnajoo Razdan has composed a number of long poems, which reveal fascinating aspects of his personality both as a poet and a saint. Bhakti tenets and ideas of Shaiva metaphysics flash in these poems also for they form the matrix of his inspiration, but here he finds a wider space to express himself in non-hymnal modes and affords us a better peep into his life as a man. We also find him sharing many themes with other Bhakti poets on a pan-Indian level: reverence for the guru, brevity of life and the "inevitability of death", concern about old age decay, vain pursuit of worldly pleasures, *nāma mahimā* or the importance of the Lord's name, the significance of *satsang* or the company of the good and the pious, perverseness of the mind and its tricks, man's entrapment in the world of senses, the need to cultivate *vairāgya* or an attitude of detachment, desire for liberation from the bonds of karma and ignorance, surrender of ego, beneficence and so on. There are many themes and concerns in his poems that are entirely his own. We have earlier referred to his long poem on the Dal Lake in which he allegorizes about the ephemeral nature of the world. There is an entire poem devoted to the greatness of Abhinavagupta. In another long poem *Zagatuk Bhāndú Jashnú* (A Folk-play called the World), he pictures himself as a jester trying to amuse God by his clowning. In the end he asks God to issue an order rewarding him with *moksha* or liberation:

> And now Krishna, take out your pen and inkstand
> Issue orders granting me *moksha* as a reward.

In this poem he presents a lively picture of the society of his times through the persona of different types of people – the potter, the jester, the grocer, the blacksmith, the mason, the farmer, the doctor, the cook, the doctor, the wrestler and people belonging to different professions – coming on the stage and strutting for a while.

Krishnajoo Razdan also depicts nature in its various moods but as a stimulus to Bhakti, the main sentiment. He lived in very picturesque surroundings and traveled widely in the Kashmir Valley, visiting almost all the pilgrimage places held sacred by the Kashmiri Hindus. These places are located in areas where nature has bestowed its abundant bounties and charms. It was natural therefore for him to see reflections of the divine in nature's splendours. To him the gushing streams chant "Hara-Hara" as they flow and the beautiful river banks of Kashmir provide ideal spots to the pining beloved (identified with

the questing soul) for a rendezvous with the divine lover. He paints very imaginative pictures of the effulgence of sunrise – influenced perhaps by the Shaiva metaphors of luminosity for the ultimate reality. Some of his poems indicate that in the end he had achieved the serene state when he could repose in his own soul:

Āra chhu vasān vogni daray
Vāra chhu karān shor
Tshopú chhu karān samandaray
Bú kyā karay zor
[Gushing out from its shallow source, the stream makes a lot of noise, but when it reaches the ocean it becomes quite and calm.]

Krishnajoo Razdan's enrapturing lyrics of Bhakti continue to charm his numerous Kashmiri admirers with their profound grace, sonority and poetic vibrancy, providing spiritual solace to them particularly in these difficult times. They have the quality of the freshness of the morning breeze about them and a fascinating fragrance that will never fade. His poems have immensely enriched the Kashmiri language and literature with their exuberant imagination, devotional passion, verbal artistry and mystic vision. The great love that he had for his mother tongue has been wonderfully expressed by him in these moving lines:

Vanay dīvīyi chhay Käshir zyavúy täth
Parakh, bozakh tú teli käthas gatshiy käth

[The Goddess, let me tell you, loves the Kashmiri language alone most dearly, It renders even crude talk, dry as wood, as sweetest utterance.]

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CHAPTER 19

Swami Lakshman Joo: The Sage of Ishaber

Jankinath Kaul 'Kamal'

Introduction

Fathers of the Kashmir Monistic Shaiva thought, who flourished in the valley from ninth to thirteenth century AD, were erudite scholars and eminent saints. They recorded what they practiced and accomplished thereby. Later, there were interruptions in this line of thought, and it was mostly the ritualistic faith that kept the tradition alive. After Shivopadyaya, the eighteenth century scholar-saint who wrote commentaries and books of the kind, there appeared saints of the order during the nineteenth century. But they only taught the lore and made no use of pen. In early twentieth century, Kashmir was blessed with a son who, not only practiced and lived this wonderful philosophy – the Trika Shaiva of Kashmir named *Pratyabhijna Darsana* – but also disseminated its postulates by teaching and writing among the seekers of the Truth in the country and abroad.

Birth and Initiation

A luminary of the first magnitude on the spiritual firmament of modern times, Lakshmana Raina was born at Namchibal in Sriagar (Kashmir) on 9 May 1907. He showed signs of spiritual fertility from his very birth. Finding the child far too precocious, his noble, god-fearing and devout parents put him in the tutelage of Swami Rama, who had been their

family priest and later turned a saint of high order in the tradition of the refined Tantric Monism of Kashmir known as the Trika system. From his early childhood Lala Saab[1] cast a spell not only over this parents and relatives but also on Swami Rama. At sixteen, however, the boy was ripe enough for being initiated by Swami Mahatab Kak, who had been commissioned by his illustrious preceptor just before entering mahasamadhi, when the promising Lakshmana was only seven years old. The enterprising and well-to-do parents could not prevail upon the young boy, for entering the life of a householder or even for taking up a job.

Renunciation and Learning

It was typical of young Lakshmana to take his own time to do things rather than act on the spur of moment and force the pace. He had requested his loving parents to make a place available for him in solitude. But it took them some time to execute the promised plan. Yet the spiritual urge compelled the earnest aspirant to leave home for practicing yoga at the famous forest *ashrama* of Sadha-malyun in Handwara district of Kashmir. He left no clue about himself at home except a line on a piece of paper requesting his brothers to give comfort to his parents. Getting the clue after a thorough and anxious search for the young Lakshmana, his father Pandit Narayan Das[2] and his preceptor Swami Mahtab Kak[3] went there to meet him. They succeeded in persuading him to come to the city and accept to live in a newly built house in their factory premises as he had desired. Here the earnest scholar-saint devoted himself to the study of Kashmir Shaiva literature available at the Research Department of the Jammu and Kashmir Government started early by Pratap Singh, the then Maharaja of the State. Highly learned Pandits had helped the Department in editing and publishing of a number of books on Kashmir Shaivism,[4] excavated and discovered throughout the State. Lakshman Joo engaged the most efficient Pandit, Rajanaka Maheshvara to teach him Shaiva Sastra at home. He also studied Sanskrit grammar and allied schools of Indian philosophy at full length. He edited the *Bhagavad Gita* with its Sanskrit commentary by Abhinavagupta and appended important notes to it. This was published when he was about twenty-five years old.

Seclusion

During the year 1934-35, Brahmachari Lakshman Joo chose a secluded place at the foothill above Ishaber village in the vicinity of the famour Nishat Garden in Srinagar. He loved the spot because his ideal preceptor Abhinavagupta, one of the most prominent authors of Kashmir Shaivism, had lived somewhere around the place in vineyards about nine centuries ago. A bungalow was constructed by his parents at the selected site. It had

a spacious garden with multi-colour flower-beds, fruit-bearing trees and a vegetable garden. Adjacent to this spiritual abode, Jia Lal Sopori of Srinagar built a house for his daughter Sharika Devi, who, after taking a vow of leading a celibate life, had found her worthy preceptor in Brahmachari Lakshman Joo. Deviji remained in utter penance for attaining perfection in the monistic Shaiva order by learning *Agama sastra* from him and practicing Shaiva-yoga under his care. Devotees and seekers of Truth began to pour in now. It was about this time that the present author was introduced in April 1935 to this holy soul of divine charm by his own master and was later recommended for the study of Utpaladeva's masterpiece *Sivastotravali*. This marked the beginning of Sunday class at the *ashrama* that always remained increasing and surcharged with wonderful spiritual vibrations.

Meeting Ramana Maharshi

Suddenly the young saint made a silent trip to certain places of his own choice in India. He wanted to confer with saints of high order perhaps to ascertain his attainments. He spent some time at Bombay beach to establish his power of spiritual perception. Then spending a very short time with Mahatma Gandhi at Sevagram he rushed to have a glimpse of Sri Aurobindo at Pondicherry where the Mother evinced interest in him. Therefrom he found his way to Tiruvanamalai to meet Ramana Maharashi at the Ramanashramam. Bhagavan Ramana looked at the young attractive saint graciously. It must have been the moment of *Drstidiksa* – initiation by mere sight. Swami Lakshman Joo spent some weeks in the presence of the Maharshi. He later expressed: "I felt those golden days were indeed divine."[5] Thus Swamiji revived the spiritual link in 1938 that united Madras and Kashmir when a monk of Madhurai, named Madhuraja had traveled to Kashmir in the eleventh century to meet the great Abhinavagupta. Swamiji returned to Kashmir with greater spiritual charm. Then he wrote a Hindi translation of the *Sambapancasika*, adding important hints as footnotes to it, which was published in 1943.

Aurobindavan Solitude

Swami Lakshman Joo took to strict seclusion in his own *ashrama* premises for several months. During that period of 'Aurobindavan solitude', he concentrated on the *Kramastotra* culled out from the *Tantraloka*. Giving a wonderful exposition of the twelve forms of Shaiva yoga in lucid Hindi preceded by the original Sanskrit text, this small book of deep insight into the Reality of Dvadasakali was published in the year 1958. Along with his progress in spiritual attainments, Swwamiji propagated the Shaiva faith so efficiently and effectively that scholars and seekers after Truth got drawn towards him, not only from this own country but also from abroad.

The Ishwara Ashrama

After India was declared a free country, she has virtually remained in shambles not tidy as before. A sense of insecurity increased day by day in everyone's mind and almost everywhere. In the suspicious circumstances, Swamiji disposed off his immovable property along with that of Sharika Devi ji, in year 1957 and started to live in a small newly constructed house at a stone's throw from the general road near Gupta Ganga temple in Ishaber village. *Ishwara Ashrama* was the name given to the a*shrama* and the disciples began to call Swamiji Ishwara Swarupa. (This *ashrama* is now the headquarter of Ishwara Ashrama Trust).

Ashrama Activities

The *Ashrama* activities gathered momentum. Swamiji held regular Sunday class (*Satsanga*). On Mondays he observed silence (*maunam*) and spent his day in 'God's House', the tiny cottage for meditation, built in a beautiful small garden near the previous *ashrama* – place. A set programme was followed on other weekdays. A spacious lecture-hall with cupboards on one side for library and a *Havana-sala* for annual yagya were constructed in the premises of Shri Ranvir Siva Temple, Gupta Ganga by the Dharmarth Trust of Jammu and Kashmir under the trusteeship of Dr. Karan Singh (MP) and former Union Minister. The complex was named 'Kashmir Shaiva Pathika'. Sunday discourses on *Tantraloka* by Swamiji, lectures by eminent spiritualists and seminars were held there with grace and glory. Swamiji, at certain occasions gave series of lectures on spiritual topics for the elevation of common people, besides taking special classes and guiding scholars in their research work. Maiden translation with footnotes in Hindi of his favourite *Stotra* the *Sivastotravali* was published by the Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series office, Varanasi in 1964. This, Swamiji taught with a new exposition each time.

Honours Conferred

Two saintly persons of Swamiji's caliber, contemporaneous with him, were Pandit Nilakantha Jyotishi (later Swami Nilakanthanada Saraswati, D.L.S, Rishikesha) and Pandit Satram Bhat of Ishaber. Although each had a different mode of thought yet the 'spiritual trio' was destined to meet and corroborate on the yoga-bhumi of Ishaber. They met closely on *Brahma-sutra Sankarabhasya* and *Yogavasistha Maharamayana*. Scholars and professors came to Swamiji from the universities of Torino (Italy), Paris, Oxford, and America for guidance in *Pratyabhijna* and *Tantraloka*. To the scholars and his disciples from foreign lands he gave pithy and short lectures on abstruse topics in English. For

Kashmiri disciples he explained the tenets of Shaivism in a literary style full of elegance and wit. To general audience he spoke in lucid Hindi. Swami Lakshman Joo read his paper in Sanskrit on *Kundalini Vijnana Rahasyam* at the All India Tantra Sammelanam held under the auspices of the Varanaseya Sanskrit University at Varanasi in 1965. His exposition of the subject was much applauded by the great luminary Mahamahopadhyaya Gopinath Kaviraj and other scholars of great repute. After some years the Varanaseya Sanskrit University conferred upon Swami Lakshman Joo the degree of D.Lit., *honoris causa,* in recognition of his splendid and valuable services to the cause of Sanskrit. When Swamaiji was informed about this, he simply gave an innocent smile and said in an expression of humour "I have become a doctor now". The Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages presented the robe of honour to Swamiji at a special function while Syed Mir Qasim was Chief Minister of the State.

Contribution

Swamiji's contribution to the promotion of the studies in Kashmir Shaivism, propagation of the Trika philosophy and growth of Kashmiri culture will be remembered for long. This considerably helped the revival of this philosophy and the way of life which had otherwise been fading away due to political changes in the Valley. Swamiji, however, became known nationally and internationally as the best exponent of the mystical experiences in the texts namely *Pratyabhijna hardaya*, *Siva sutra*, *Vijnanabhairava* and *Paratrisika* which also bear his elaborate introductions. Swamiji's immense erudition stimulated some more disciples and admirers to expound these Shaiva texts. Prof. Nilakanth Gurtoo wrote Hindi translations of *Paratrisika* and *Spandakarika.* The present writer, wrote an independent, pithy and up-to-date Hindi commentary on *Siva-sutras* that was highly praised by the Master. Smt. Kamala Bawa translated the text and commentary of *Pratyabhijna Hardayam* into Hindi. Smt. Prabha Devi translated into Hindi *Parapravesika*, *Paramarthasara* and *Guru stuti.* All these have been published. Dr. Oscar Botto (Italy) wrote on Abhinavagupta and *Tantraloka* in Italian and Dr. Lillian Silburn (France) translated some Shaiva hymns and certain texts on Shaivism into French respectively. Thus Swamiji taught as well as spread with effective measure this unique philosophy of Kashmir in India and abroad.

Birthday and Excursions

Swamiji's birthday was celebrated every year on such a grand scale that it turned to be a great fair for common people and an auspicious day for his admirers and devotees who flocked from all parts of the country to have a glimpse of the sage sitting in long

Samadhi. Indian as well as foreign disciples attended to see this godman 'living free' on this earth. Sri Dinanath Ganjoo, Smt. Kamla Bhagati, Sri Narayan Joo and Smt. Raj Dulari Kaul among many others sang Kashmiri poems of eulogy to their preceptor. This cheerful holyman of wisdom, wit and peace distributed *prasada* all day long. The next day Swamiji spent in giving gifts to devotees and disciples. Once Swamiji remarked, "If I had to celebrate my birthday twice a year I would finish up all my extra property by distributing it."

Excursions to places of sanctity and natural scenery in the valley were occasionally arranged. Kirtans by disciples and discourses by Swamiji were usual features all along. Prominent places visited on large group excursions were: Verinag, Takshakanag, Karkutanag, Sadha-malyun, Uma Nagari, Hangalgund, Tangamarg, Naran-nag (Sindh Valley), Dacchigam and Dara etc. by bus and different places around and in Dal Lake by *dunga* (house-boat) during summer besides longer trips to Hardwar and Rishikesh during winter.

Moments of bliss were experienced when saints and men of learning came to meet the sage of Ishaber. Dr. Karan Singh often visited the *ashrama* to receive blessings. Smt. Indira Gandhi, the former Prime Minster of India sought interview with the sage, whenever she came on a visit to the State. Swamiji had a meeting with J. Krishnamurti at Kotarkhana in the Dal Lake. Maharashi Mahesh Yogi visited the Ishwara Ashrama and invited Swamiji to his house-boats in the Dal Lake. Swamiji gave an interesting exposition of the *Vijnanabhairava* to his devotees on request. Paul Reps, in his short introduction to the chapter 'Centering'[6] says: "It presents 112 ways to open the invisible door of consciousness. I see Lakshman joo gives his life to its practice". Swami Ramdas (a *jivanmukta*) of Kanhangarh, Mangalore; Swami Satyananda Saraswati of Munger and Swami Muktananda of Ganeshpuri were pleased to meet the Swami when they visited Srinagar. Swami Lakshman Joo himself attended and presided over spiritual meetings held occasionally in the Valley and outside it. In 1976 Sri Ramakrishna Ashram, Srinagar (Kashmir) organized a spiritual congregation in the *Ashrama* precincts. This was graced by the world famous cultural ambassador of India, Swami Ranganathananda while the meeting was presided over by Swami Lakshman Joo, who described Sri Ramakrishna as a *Siddha Yogi*.

Another time Swami Ranganathananda was invited by Swamiji to address special meetings of scholars and devotees and declared the chief guest as 'messenger of peace'. Swamiji occasionally went to Hardwar and Rishikesh to meet saints especially Swami Sivananda Saraswati of the Divine Life Society giving expositions to parallelism of Kashmir Shaiva mysticism with mysticism of Sankara Vedants.

Ecstasy

During his years of maturity, Swami Lakshman Joo was writing a comprehensive compendium of Kashmir Shaiva Darsana in lucid Hindi. It runs into several chapters. Excerpts from the manuscript were at times read out by him to the selected disciples among whom the present writer was fortunate to be one. It is understood that writing of the book remained incomplete but was published later in 1994 by Smt. Prabha Devi Ji. Prof. P.N. Pushp while writing his foreword to this book titled *Trika Rahasya Prakriya* also observed the incompleteness of this work. During his later days of ecstasy Swamiji only explained selected pithy verses from the *Agama sastras* and *Yogavasistha* and sang these alongwith his disciples in divine rapture. These continue to be sung by the devotees at the Sunday satsanga meeting with the wonderful *Gurustuti* composed early by one of Swamiji's illustrious disciple of Varanasi, Ṣri Rameshwar Jha, who having studied and practiced Vedanta mysticism had found great interest in the Kashmir Shaiva mysticism and had accepted Lakshman Joo as his preceptor of the Faith.

Occult Powers

Though Swamiji was a master of occult powers but he never made a display of those powers. Swamiji was against their being used as he was convinced that the use of occult powers was an impediment on the spiritual path. He was the master of self-control and care. However, he appeared to have made use of his divine power sparingly and with great caution. Not only his close disciples but also un-acquainted people of different beliefs, from far and near, some of whom had not even met the Swami in person, were convinced of his powers which he might have used unassumingly for their upliftment. Certain contemporary saints of the country opined that Swami Lakshman Joo had been strictly guarding his earned treasure of powers and if at all, he used those scarcely. His awe-inspiring sight and proverbial sympathy drew people of all walks of life near him with their problems to which he was often sharp in giving decisions. It was also observed that he gave a healing touch to those who needed it. Common people believed him to be a redeemer from evils. Some persons of pure heart felt a current of mysterious joy running through their body while receiving his touch on bowing at his lotus feet.

Picture of personality

Swamiji had disciplined himself into such unwinking vigilance that he was never found saying or doing a thing that was not in consonance with the Truth of his way of life. Only eight months before Swamiji choose to merge in the infinite, his chief disciple Brahmavadini

Sharika Devi entered the Divine on 1 February 1991. He did wonderfully well what was quite befitting to his nature and practice. In fact there was very high aiming in the core of the Swamiji's very existence which was manifest in a happy combination of three elements:

(i) Simplicity, an expression of simplicity;
(ii) Enthusiasm, the vital push of the spirit within;
(iii) Wisdom, the light of the soul as the portion of the Divine Himself.

Endowed with magnetic personality, divine charm and wide scholarship behind his spiritual attainments Shaivacharya Iswara Swarupa Sri Swami Lakshman Joo was an inextricable combination of life and religion. By years of study and contemplation, his practice of Yoga had ripened to such an extent that his teachings contain the best solution to the problems that face humanity today. His very presence was solace to the depressed, hope to the forlorn, joy to the seeker, inspiration to the scholar and satisfaction to the soul striving for spiritual upliftment. The best in him was all-lovingness that attracted towards him people of all faiths and of different creed. An embodiment of magnificent qualities, he was a faithful friend, a benefactor brother, a fondling father, a true teacher, a noble neighbour, an instinctive instructor, an affirmed administrator, a congenial companion and above all the girdling guide of all who came near him. His disciples and admirers sought to throng around his radiant personality as honey-bees hover about a fragrant lotus in bloom. Iswara Swarupa's sagacity made him into an exemplary sage. He looked simply divine, when he made a short tour to United States in June-July 1991.

Homage

The playful ways of the Master, the sage of Ishaber, came to an end on this earth in Delhi in the early hours of the 27 September 1991 in moments of calmness and tranquility. He had verily been a *yogabhrasta* (fallen from yoga in previous birth) for he was born in a house of pious as well as wealthy and well-thought parents – *sucinam srimatam gehe yogabhrastobijayate.*[7] The present life of grace and glory was only the means for this Divine Being to merge into Supreme Shiva, the final beatitude of life. The powers of Truth and light may not be visible to the naked eye but they are there for the discerning. To pay homage to the beloved 'Gurudeva' let us live for the Divine and let Divine take control of our life to fulfil his purpose.

REFERENCES

1. Pet name given to Swami Lakshman Joo by his parents.
2. The pioneer house-boat merchant of Kashmir – had provided complimentary house-boats to Swami

Vivekananda on his visit to Kashmir in 1897-98. It is understood that the great Swami had visited Swami Rama, the grand-preceptor of Swami Lakshman Joo, at Fatehkadal *ashrama*.

3. The chief disciple of Swami Rama and preceptor of Swami Lakshman Joo. Swami Mahtab Kak had also been the preceptor of my father Pt. Jagannath Kaul who could see only 32 summers till 1927 AD.
4. Sri Jagdish Chandra Chatterji, in his book *Kashmir Shaivism* published by the State Government in 1914 writes – "The first beginnings of what has been called Kashmir Shaivism to distinguish it from other forms of Shaivism known and still practiced in different parts of India, may have to be traced to the Siva-sutras which together with the commentary on them by Kshemaraja called the *vimarsini*, have been published as the opening volume of this series of publications, i.e. *The Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies*.

   Shri Chatterji, with a group of enthusiastic and erudite workers had done yeoman's work in establishing the Research Department (of J & K Govt.) which was nurtured by Mahamahopadyaya Mukundaram Shastri, Sri Ram Chandra Kak (who later rose to be the Prime Minister of the state), Pandit Maheshwara Razdan, Pandit Harabatta Shastri and other scholars. Besides discovering works related to Kashmir Shaivism, some historical manuscripts like Gilgit Mss. etc. were also published by the Department.
5. Refer to the *Mountain Path, (Tiruvannamalai)*, April 1985.
6. A chapter from *Zen Flesh Zen Bane* Compiled by Paul Reps, 1957.
7. *The Bhagawad Gita*, VI-41.

CHAPTER 20

Kashmiri Pandits – Originators of Pahari-Kangra School of Art

P.N. Kachru

The massive migration from the North, seeking warmer pastures, resulted in Indo-Aryan or Indo-Germanic culture that gave birth to Vedic and the Zendic cultures. The great Indo-Bactro-Grecian culture that mixed-up and thrived in North-Western India and was responsible for the evolution of richest movements known as Gandhara and Mathura Schools which were destined to thrive into the golden age of Guptas. This cultural movement was responsible for enrichment of North India, which culminated into the aesthetic pinnacles of Kashmir school by establishing, now internationally known, the Wushkar Baroque.[1] These powerful trends were inducted by artists of Kashmir, to Little and Greater Tibets, Central Asia, Mongolia and China.

The Kashmiri painters, in their heyday of established movements had chiseled and garnished a style based on the traditions of Harvan formalism and Baroque of Wushkar school and contented with their philosophic thought. The chromatically decorative element composed with spatially organised figurative symbols constituted the great Kashmir murals, of which the majestic but lingering appearance still stands in the monasteries of Alchi in Ladakh. Further, the style was subtly and sensitively ornamented with the linear sensibilities observed in Mathura and Pala schools during their seasonal sojourns and pilgrimages.

Hordes of such aesthetes and creators went out in the company of eminent and propagating Kashmiri scholars under numerous leading painters like Hasuraj and led their artistic movement as far as into Tibet, while contributing to the establishment of themes of Buddhist Mahayana–Vajrayana in Central Asia.

The barbaric and devastative onslaught of Islamic iconoclasm, ushered in early thirteenth century, vandalising and destroying the monumental edifices and temples of national sanctity along with the invaluable and creative wall frescoes, murals and gold giit paintings. The examples are still lingering over the mud walls of monasteries of Alchi. Consequently, the Kashmiri painter suffered a deep cultural shock and a grievous starvation for means and methods of expressio.ı. But, as always like a typical Pandit he not only survived the shock but came up with an alternative equipment that strengthened and energised the Kashmir miniaturist movement. Thus the base for expression shifted from monumental areas and structures to portable areas of Burjapatras and home made paper. This alternative means for expression did not only safeguard the continuance of his creativity secretly, but also made it easy for him to carry his masterpieces in case of his migration to seek shelter for his life. This physical fanning out widened the field of diffusion for the Kashmir style, leaving behind the pieces of master–expression not only in neighbouring Himalayan principalities but in places of pilgrimage like Kurukshetra, Vrindavan, Haridwar and in as far away places as Sangam and Varanasi.

During the transitory periods of peace in the valley the customary pilgrimages, particularly in winters, had taken the shape of an intensified yatra of Sthanapatis (Thanapti) from numerous religio-cultural centers like Jeshtheswara, Martand (Matan) and Vijeyashwra (Vejabror). This would compensate their prevailing penury through annual visitations to their *Jajmans* living in various Indian principalities. These hordes of migratory Brahmins were joined by numerous painters, calligraphers and scribes who, in their search for economic survival, would move from village to village, particularly in neighbouring outer Himalayas and Punjab. The numerous groups of scribes and painters would drop themselves in a nearby Sarai of a town at its outskirts and then fan out in the alleys of township and would hawk and call *Muratgarrh*! *Chitragarh*! *Likhari*! In later periods of Indian Muslim rule their calls changed into *Mussavir*, *Katib*, *Mussavir-mi-katib*, the painter and scribe together.

In absence of printing technology the profession of a scribe and book illuminator proved to be an indispensable profession that kept the starving Brahmin and painter wedded to his staunch faith and philosophy. He would hawk in the various lanes of Indian settlements and would transcribe and illumine the various tattering *Pothis* and manuscripts. It had become customary for every household to provide these Pandits free quantities of oil, besides their wages, so that they could finish their job by burning the midnight oil. The wandering Pandits would pack up their bundles the moment their job would finish, and would move to another Sarai and seek out their job for transcription and illumination. At the advent of spring time, in case the situation permitted, these groups would return to the Valley to spend their summer time with their kin and families.

Various collectors and research scholars, particularly Swiss, German and American teams and organisations have collected a sizable number of such manuscripts and *Pothis* from various Indian townships, scribed and painted by these wandering pilgrims of culture who fanned out the aesthetic elements of Kashmir School to wider areas of the subcontinent. Recently, one of the most creative collections of a high aesthetic order lying now in the Museum Reitburg, Zurich from Alice Boner collection of Switzerland, has been published by these authorities. This is one of the finest collections of Kashmir School, depicting the various forms of Shakti as interpreted through the creative forms of Kashmir Miniaturist movement

Through its history Kashmir had to pass through a convulsive trauma brought in by fanatic converts of Mongol breed that led to the mass exodus of Brahmins, not once but several times, through the past centuries for adhering to their faith and philosophy. In such migrations there were some talented sculptors and painters who, for centuries, had been responsible for establishing the Kashmiri school of sculpture and post-Gupta schools of Pala styles in painting and also for spreading the movement to Tibet and Central Asia. Under the severe threat of proslytisation, and under the threat of being dubbed creators of idolatry, these artists migrated for their life into the neighbouring principalities of Himachal Pradesh. It was in this region of outer Himalayas where the Kashmir School thrived again and gave rise to gorgeous tapestry of art that became internationally known as Pahari movement, culminating in the renowned Kangra Kalam or Kangra School of painting.

This renaissance of Pahari culture was a post-Mughal phenomenon when the most of the Himachal princedoms and states could independently look after their principalities. Most of the princes who had to be in attendance to the Mughal court and had to eek out the resources of their states in order to cater to the whimsical demands of the monarch and also, had to see the fullness of the imperial coffers, which not only reduced the states to penury and poverty but also created local cultural vacuum. Most of the artistic talents hovered round the imperial court for seeking recognition and prosperity. This cultural exodus did a great disservice to the then leading northern schools. The artistes got detached from their respective traditions, trends and locale and had to be subservient to the moods and methods of the monarch, besides reducing their talents to mere eulogy and falsehood. With the disintegration of the imperial rule the Rajas and the princes reverted back to their principalities to reorganise their home rule. The cultural scene of the Himachal principalities again reverberated and started rejuvenating amongst its milieu and methods and traditions which were vitalised and reinterpreted by the Kashmir Movement. Thus the post-Mughal vacuum was filled and augmented with the rich Baroque introduced by the talented fugitive Kashmiri artist family, which escaped from the threat of proslytisation.

This family of Rajanka (Razdan or Raina) Brahmins swept the entire region with their genius and were responsible for the introduction of one of the most romantic movements in fine art in almost all the principalities of Jasrota, Basholi, Guler, Jammu, Chamba, Noorpur and Kangra. The family swept, dominated and led the movement through 1658 to ending 19th century in almost all the centers of art-activity and enjoyed favourable positions with various Rajas of the Pahari principalities.

Pandit Seu[2] Raina is the ancestor of this family who, it is presumed, left Kashmir under the threat of forced conversion, sometime in mid-17th century and settled in Guler[3] during the reign of Raja Dalip Singh and Raja Bikram Singh. M. S. Randhawa believes that "proselytism of Islam was at its height during the last years of the reign of Aurangzeb. In the last quarter of the 17th century and the first quarter of the 18th century a number of Kashmiri Brahmins migrated from Kashmir to Kangra valley to seek sanctuary in the courts of the Rajas of Kangra Hill states. It is very likely that Pandit Seu was one of them". Even now, it has been found that there are several families of Kashmiri Brahmins, particularly Rainas, who have settled in Haripur Guler as well as in some villages in Tehsil Palampur. The family's origin has been confirmed repeatedly through their initials on various panitings done by Pandit Seu and two of his renowned painter sons Manak (Mana) and Nainsukh (Nana) who mostly impress their name prefixed with 'Pandit' and suffixed with 'Raina' or 'Rajanka'.

Pandit Seu Raina founded and introduced the "pre-Kangra" style in Guler under the princely patronage of Raja Dalip Singh. The style richly vibrated with an amalgam of Pahari folk and Kashmir Pala style. The static attitude of forms, the solidity and formality of the figures and the division of picture spaces – all these qualities were imposed with decorative brilliance of colours, which imparted the tribal passion, energy, vehemence and depth of thoughtfulness in paintings. These qualities which are basically the elements of Kashmir School, are primarily responsible for the powerful sprouting of Basohli School which, it seems that Pandit Seu and his two genius sons Manak and Nainsukh, have inculcated under the patronage of the then Basohli Raja. The most regular and frequent movement of Pandit Seu and his genius sons between Basohli and Guler do indicate that the father and the two sons must have been working simultaneously in Basohli and Guler, as the two centers are very near to each other. Besides, the interaction of influences must have worked through past centuries, as the town was an important stopover on the trade route between Kashmir, Punjab and rest of India; and also because Raja Amrit Pal (1757-1776) was a reputed lover of art and culture.

The early quarter of twentieth century regenerated the discovery[4] of these movements, particularly of Basohli which have become much sought after and fabulously priced pieces of art. Incidentally, it was by sheer chance that a sizeable collection of Basohli came as a valued share to our state.[5]

In fact, with Pandit Seu's entry into Raja Dalip Singh's atelier a complete change took place in the outlook of the workshop and brought into practice the style popularly known as "Pre-Kangra Kalam". Later on, the style seems to have spread effectively to other states, but most effectively persued in Guler, Basohli and Jammu. Subjectwise, Pandit Seu seemed to have invested his genius in portraitures, which could successfully maintain the pictorial qualities of vertical projection and attainment of dimensions by juxtaposition and interspersing of forms and surfaces over his canvas. Some of his highly technical and dexterous portrait studies are luckily salvaged and preserved in various museums and collections. Notable of them are : the portrait sketches of his two sons, Manak and Nainsukh, the famous standard bearers of the movement[6]. While he was under the employ of Raja Dalip Singh of Guler, Pandit Seu had done some of the masterly portrait studies superimposed with highly sensitive and linear brushwork; such as Mian Gopal Singh of Guler playing chess (Chandigarh Museum), formerly in the collection of Guler Darbar; "A Seated Courtier" (Victoria and Albert Museum, London); Raja Bishen Singh of Guler (in the National Museum, New Delhi) and again "Raja Bishen Singh", presently in the collection of late Sir Cowasji Jahangir, Bombay, the renowned patron of the modern Indian art movements. Besides, the portrait of Raja Bikram Singh of Guler, "doing puja" and a "battle scene" (Chandigarh Museum), the "Dancing Darveshes" (in Lahore Museum), all are the subjects for a deeper study and appreciation for aesthetics. The frozen attitudes of hands, the solidity and formality of the figures and the division of the picture spaces – all these qualities were imposed with decorative brilliance of colours which imparted the tribal passion, energy, vehemence and depth of thoughtfulness in canvases. These qualities which are basically the elements of Kashmir School are primarily responsible for the powerful sprouting of Basohli School, which it seems that Pandit Seu and his two genius sons had inculcated under the patronage of Basohli Raja.

The three generations of Seu Raina spearheaded the fusion of Basohli Baroque to the final flowering of the new movement that culminated in Kangra School. This transformation was the work of a single family of influential artists who originated from Kashmir.[7] The family worked at several hill centers. Guler is the center for this technical development where the family of Pandit Seu got settled in their initial stage. Seu's son Nainsukh is the best known and the most "innovative". He was employed by Raja Balwant Singh of Jasrota (1724-63). After Balwant Singh's death in 1763, Niansukh moved to Basohli where his elder brother Manaku was working and was practising and propagating the new style. One of Nainsukh's sons was working in the court of Raj Singh (1764-94), the ruler of Chamba.[8]

The ultimate blooming of the style in Kangra under the patronage of Raja Sansar Chand (1775-1823) was piloted by the third generation of Pandit Seu's dynasty. It was here that the lyrical Guler style reached a high point in the love themes of Kangra Kalam

and the subjects and themes were from the love poems from the *Rasikapriya* of Keshav Das, the court poet of Raja Madhukar Shah (1580-1601) of Central India. The Nayak and Nayika in the *Rasikapriya* are Krishna and Radha, the ideal love symbols of God and soul.[9] *Geet Govinda* series and *Bhagwat Purana* also were the themes of this movement.

Geet Govinda of the Vashnavite poet Jaideva has achieved its passionate excellence through the master pieces created by the renowned painter Manaku, the eldest son of Pandit Seu. Poet Jaideva was court-poet of Sena King Lakshmana Sena of Bengal wherefrom the Pala-Sena movement of the Guptas laid a marked influence on Kashmir School. Besides, as typical of the nature of an artist, Manaku was inspired by the poet's weaving into his songs an eroticism of fascinating hearty imageries which make the poems throb with passion, and above all, the word-music which flows like a murmuring brook gushing in a verdant forest. The rich imageries, the pen-pictures of landscape and the treatment of various states of love became a treasure and a rich tapestry for the artist to draw upon. The artist's technical excellence, aesthetic sensitivity and emotional vibrations were idealised through the expression of his lyrical drawings, throbbing colours and quiet landscape locales. Some examples of the most romantic compositions of Jaidev and subsequently emotionally charged transformation by Manaku are worthy of high contemplation.

The two sets of *Geet-Govinda* by Manaku – one painted in Basohli Kalam (1730) and another in Kangra style – became an issue of debate in the columns of modern art criticism. It was finally resolved that Manaku, while in the employ of the Basohli Court in early eighteenth century, painted the Basohli set that was in the collection of Lahore Museum which I studied in 1946-47. The second set of *Geet Govinda* painted in Kangra style represents the most exalted and final stages of sophistication which Manaku achieved through his experimentation with his techniques and observations. The throbbing and sumptuous colour, controlled but expressive draughtsmanship and the lively set-up of the landscape had established the unique standard for Manaku's compositions. The paintings are supposed to have been painted by Manaku in Guler period of 1760-70. At some later period of time it appears to have reached the court of Maharaja Samsar Chand of Kangra and later to Tehri Garhwal as the dowry of the two daughters of Sansar Chand who were married into Tehri-Garhwal family. It was purely the genius of Manaku who could establish the Basohli Kalam and then evolve through it Kangra Kalam wherein he displayed all the aesthetic sensitivities and sensibilities.

Another controversy errupted between the well known art historian Karl Khandalavala and the researcher of Pahari movement M.S. Randhava; the former claiming that the name Manaku of the Sanskrit verse appearing in the reverse side of the Basohli *Geet Govinda* collection, was actually the name of the noble lady and not of the artist who is supposed to have painted the collection. Khandalavala's plea was that the name does not appear as Manak but as Manaku sounding it to be a female name. However, the controversy was

settled by Dr. Raghuvira, the well-known Sanskrit scholar, who translated and interpreted the two identical colophons appearing on both the Basohli and Kangra styles. The Sanskrit colophon appears as given below:

Dr. Raghuvira analyses the two last lines in the following manner: *Vyarcayad* = caused to be composed; *aja bhakta* = the devotee of Aja (the unhorn, vishnu); Manaku = through Manaku; *Chitrakartra* = the artist; *Vicitram* = charaterised by; *Lalita* = a delicate; *Lipi* = brush; *Geet Govinda citram* = The painting of *Geet-Govinda.*

He translates the whole couplet thus: "In the Vikrama year corresponding to the moon, the mountains, the gems and the sages, viz. VS 1787 and 1730 AD, a devotee of Aja, caused this painting of the *Geet Govinda*, characterised by a delicate brush, to be painted by Manaku, the artist". He adds further the literal meaning of the whole verse thus: "In the year 1787 VS (1730 AD) Malini, noted for her qualities of discrimination and judgement, and who prized her character as her principal wealth, who was a devotee of the Immortal one (Vishnu), had a pictorial version of *Geet Govinda* in beautiful and varied script composed by the painter Manaku". Further he clarifies that 'Manak' or 'Manaku' is a male name in the hills, and is never used as a female name. The female name is 'Manako', 'Gulabo' and so on. While pointing to the grammatic principal and the gender of its agent, Gopi Krishna Kanoria,[10] scholar and aesthete, clears the confusion in an easy manner. 'Manaku', the principal and its agent *Chitrakartra* is enough to establish the masculinity of the painter.

Manak's younger brother Nainsukh took his service with Raja Balwant Singh of Jammu as well. His entry into the court of Jammu changed the entire mood of the tradition. Identically like his brother he had enough to offer to the existing traditions of Jammu Kalam. Observes W.G. Archer, "Within this local tradition (of Jammu Kalam) which reaches its height in the portrait of Brij Raj Dev. Nainsukh of Jasrota appears as a sudden mysterious intruder." "Intruder" in the sense that he introduced and prevailed upon the situation by introducing his strong and well organised notions about the pictorial values over which he had a masterly grip and command. His colour schemes and themes were subservient to the organisation of form and the dimensional planes. In short, he could be put in the category of formalists and abstractionists who use natural forms for pictorial organisations. He could be aptly titled as Picasso and Modrian of the Pahari movement. His is the marked feeling for geometric structure, strong colour and vitalistic line. His whole approach is architectural. His pictures are a series of receding and forwarding planes and thus nothing else could be an ideal contribution to the simple flatness of the local style. Compared to his elder brother Manak who could be called poetic and romantic, Nainsukh was an aesthete and fundamental. A typical example of his planned picturisation is his well-known painting of Raja Balwant Singh listening to music. It is a well-planned canvas composed with horizontal and vertical divisions of the background and the palace

architecture, within which the Raja and the musicians are mere decorations of the broader planning and composition. There is a similar masterpiece "Raja Balwant Singh of Jammu inspecting a horse."[11]

In earlier career of his Guler days and later on in Jammu his aesthetic and formalistic principles dominated the local tradition, while his occasional short visits, under the patronage of Raja Amrit Pal of Basohli, created a great change in later Basohli period. Nainsukh seemed to be a dominating influence in Jasrota also, and being so effective in Basohli, Guler, Jammu and Chambha.

Emergence of Chamba School

In the later part of eighteenth century the Sambha principality seemed to have been gaining an edge over the neighbouring Basohli. This was the period when Basohli became subservient to Chamba politically as well as economically. This prosperity seemed to be the reason for cultural and artistic rejuvenation, particularly in the fields of architecture and painting. The movements of Nainsukh from Guler to Jammu and from Jammu to the court of Raja Amrit Pal of Basohli where he laid deep influences of his own style that was a subtle fusion of delicate silhouettes and Pahari colour tones. Thus the element of aesthetic Romanticism was brought in the Basohli – primitive style. The style took firm roots in Basohli quickly and very swiftly. The door wings made in Kangra style were brought by Raja Raj Singh to Chamba when he sacked Basohli palace in 1782.[12] Nainsukh would visit Chamba court occasionally, and later on, his sons Ranjha and Nikka were responsible for the artistic prosperity and the establishment of Chamba Kalam, it being an ideal fusion of Kangra-Guler miniaturism, Pahari purity of colour tones and element of primitive vigour of Basohli forms. The well-known series of *Rukmini Haran* are a typical example of Chamba School studies.

The subjugation of and predominance over Basohli seems to have been responsible for the emergence of Chamba style as most of the sons of Nainsukh – Ranjha, Nikka and Godhu led the activity of the atelier of Raja Raj Singh of Chamba.[13] Nikka, the third son of Nainsukh, is known to have founded the style in Chamba court but was later on joined by Ranjha (fourth son) and Godhu (the second son). All the sons, Kama, Godhu, Nikka and Ranjha were, along with their father, the Guleria painters and were for sometime settled there wherefrom they laid their artistic tentacles over Basohli and Chamba, finally settling in Chamba. This activity was further strengthened by the effective contribution of Harku and Chajoo, the two sons (third generation) of Nikka.

Ranjha, the most talented one, remained in the court of Raj Singh from 1772-94. These were the years when well-known *Anirudh Usha*[14] series was painted by him. Intermittently, Ranjha seemed to have been paying commissioned visits to Basohli where,

in the service of Raja Amrit Pal he painted the *Nala Damayanti* series.[15] This series, though painted in Basohli was the typical Chamba style, thus having laid its strong influences on Basohli tradition. In this series there are visibly strong influences of Chamban architectural forms.[16]

Ranjha the fourth son of Nainsukh, was most dynamic in maintaining relations from Chamba with Guler and Basohli as well. He seems to have been occasionally attending in these courts, particularly the court of Raja Bhup Singh of Guler.[17]

A significant collection of Ramayana series was painted by Ranjha during the reign of Raja Bhupendra Pal (1816) of Basohli. The basic drawings of the series were got made by Ranjha from another Kashmiri artist (not in the family) named Sudarshan.[18] This gives insight into the methodology and process that must have been going on into the workshops of artists, where there used to be a professional division between master-drawer and the painter. Such a tradition in division of work seems to have been lingering on in the house of the last-known painter, Narayan Joo Kachru "Mooratgarh" of Srinagar. The division of work was found between him and his wife where his wife would prepare the drawings and he would complete the miniatures with colours and the brushwork details.

Ranjha's son Gursahai (fourth generation and grandson of Nainsukh) proved a greater genius in drawing and draughtsmanship. Super-sensitive, erotic and highly passionate themes were the main subjects of his paintings. His great studies in appreciation of human anatomical form and its highly interpretative formation could have been the work of a genius only. He thus composed highly sensitive compositions of Nude studies. The *koka-shastra* series also remained one of the chief products of his collections.

Atra, the son of Nikka worked in the court of Raja Raj Singh of Chamba. The inscription over one of his paintings cites the names of Nikka, Ranjha (Ram Dayal), Chajju, Harku (Nikka's son) and Saudagar (the fifth generation and grandson of Nikka) besides himself, mentioning all to be in the atelier of Raja Raj Singh of Chamba. Ram Dayal, the grandson of Nainsukh worked in the court of Bijai Sen of Mandi. Kiru – five generations away remained in the court of Patiala.

Nainsukh's elder brother Manaku had two sons, namely Khushala and Fattu. The whole family worked in the court of Raja Goverdhan Chand of Guler till his death in 1773. They continued with Raja Prakash Chand till 1785, but intermittently leading their projects in other centers like Basohli and Chamba. The occurance of financial crisis in the court of Guler led to the migration to Raja Sansar Chand's court at Kangra. Khushala became the chief painter in the Kangra court and painted a *Geet Govinda* series for Maharaj Sansar Chand.

Chetu the great grandson of Khushala (fifth generation) and Sultanu the grandson of Nainsukh, both were the court artists of Raja Shamsher Singh (1826). Chetu's paintings reached the court of Garhwal, but there are indications to his physical presence in the court

of Sudarshan Shah of Tehri Garhwal,[19] where he established the Garhwal School of Pahari movement.[20]

The other important centers of Pahari movement led and established were Tira Sujanpur,[21] Mandi,[22] Patiala (a non-Himachal center) and Kulu. The Kulu style is considered to be an ideal amalgam of folk and Kashmir style. Some of the fourth generation Rainas migrated to Kulu in the second decade of the eighteenth century.[23]

Surprisingly, the six generations of Pandit Seu Raina produced about forty-six children, and all of them artists, who penetrated their genius very deep into the milieu of all Himachal principalities, thus embedding the whole treasure-accumulation of four thousand years into their new home of outer Himalayas. It needs yet another treatise to keep their track in all the courts and cultural centers of the region.

The essence of cultural treasure of Himachal Pahari is the decoctant of human experience accumulated through the constant influx and outflux of human migrations and re-migration along with the shores of Mediterranean, the Tigris-Euphratic waters and the settlements which thrived along the shores of Ganga, Yamuna, Sindhu and Saraswati. It has been time-and-again that this forward human leap had to be preceded by a mighty exodus of civilised races. Thus history in this respect, has been repeating itself; and to complete the circle the 'history' has again put us on the exodus to give once again a great leap forward as we did in the recent past.

REFERENCES

1. Wushkar, a well-known village in Baramulla (Kashmir) on the bank of Vitasta where famous Buddhist Viharas had a massive façade 314 ft. long of terracotta creations depicting Buddha's life. The image of Buddha was two and a half times larger than normal human size. The style, now internationally known after the name of the village, is the culmination of Gandhara-Mathura style rendered with sensitive details (linear) of expression and decoration.
2. The name Shivji Raina is even now common name amongst Kashmiri Pandits. Phonologically, in Himachal Pahari parlance, Shiv has been styled into Seu.
3. The pilgrimage registers kept by Pandas at Haridwar, Kurukhestra and Pehowa do confirm and state as "Pandit Seu Raina of Guler".
4. First discoveries were made by W.G. Archer and Percy Brown.
5. Though in most inhospitable conditions, this biggest collection now lies in the Dogra Art Gallery of Jammu. Previous to the acquisition, this valuable collection remained as the personal property of one Pahda Kunj Lal, a descendent of the royal physicians of Basohli Rajas. It was in 1956 that a devastating fire in Basohli destroyed property of Hakim Pahda Kunjlal and thus he was compelled by circumstances to present the sizeable collection to the then Chief Minister of the State, Bakshi Ghulam Mohmmad who came to visit the town. This valued collection was loaned by the Chief Minister for an exhibition of Festival of Kashmir, of which myself and reputed Kashmir poet late Pandit Dinanath 'Nadim' were the organisers. I felt that this treasure should remain as a national treasure rather than a personal property. Pandit 'Nadim' and myself posed the problem to the then Education Minister G.M. Sadiq who sorted out the matter with the Chief Minister and got the collection entered as the national property.

6. Chandigarh Museum and Indian Museum, Calcutta.
7. "Arts of India" – Victoria and Albert Museum.
8. This led to the foundation of Chamba School.
9. God is achieved not through austerities but through love.
10. "Notes on Pahari Painting" – by Gopi Krishna Kanoria (Rupa Lekha, AIFACS).
11. Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
12. Now the door-wings are in the collection of Bohri Singh Museum, Chamba.
13. Raja Raj Singh was the ruler of Chamba (1764-94 AD).
14. Bohri Singh Museum, Chamba.
15. Dr. Karan Singh Collection.
16. Dr. Karan Singh collection. Collection : Bohri Singh Museum of Chamba and the Punjab Museum, Chandigarh.
17. Kangra – Artists – Art and Letters, 1955, Vol. XXIX, No. 1.
18. Collection: Bharat Kala Bhawan, Banaras. "The Artist of the so-called Ranjha-Ramayana drawings," *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. XXI, No. 9.3-4, 1979.
19. "N.G. Mehta collection" by Khandalawala.
20. The "Ramayana Series", "The Rape of Yadav women", the "Birth of Krishna" from Bhagwat folio and "Rukmini Parinaya" – all in the collection of Chandigarh Museum.
21. Godhu, the second son of Nainsukh along with uncles Fatu and Khushala, took the Kangra influence in the principality.
22. Ram Dayal, the great grandson of Nainsukh worked in the court of Raja Bijay Singh (1851) of Mandi.
23. The famous *Shangri Ṛamayana* series have been painted in this Kalam.

CHAPTER 21

Kashmir's Contribution to the Visual Imagery at Alchi

Geetika Kaw Kher

Introduction

The monastic complex at Alchi in central Ladakh largely datable to 10^{th}-11^{th} century AD lies in the scenic mountain valley of Indus. It is considered as the most important of all the monastic complexes masterminded by Rinchen-bzang-po (958-1055 AD) primarily because it has been left intact. This complex comprises a group of six buildings and its importance lies in the fact that it has the best preserved mural paintings in the area especially in two of its monuments viz., *Du-khang* (the assembly hall) and *Sum-tsek* (three tiered temple)

According to the inscriptions at Alchi, the *Du-khang* was built by Kalden Sherap and *Sum-tsek* by Tshultrim O, both followers of Rinchen-bzang-po, undoubtedly the most dominating religious personality in Ladakh of that time. Moreover the iconographic program followed at *Du-khang* reflects the teachings of this great religious teacher and the complete layout almost parallels the one seen at Sumda which can be directly attributed to him.

While on the one hand, the mural paintings on the monuments here are considered as hallmark of Buddhist painting in the area, on the other hand, they have multitude of stories to tell about the contemporary painting scenario in Kashmir Valley. Unfortunately as Huntington,[1] Snellgrove[2] and P. Pal[3] unanimously observe there is hardly left any trace of Kashmiri paintings of that time which can be directly compared to the ones at

Alchi. Nevertheless, there are enough historical, stylistic and epigraphical evidences which strengthen the contention and here onwards our hypothesis that Kashmir Valley played a very important role in the stylistic and iconographical development of the murals at Alchi and other temples/monasteries which fall on the route between Srinagar to Guge (presently in Western Tibet).

Antiquity of the Ladakh-Kashmir Relations

Cunningham[4] observes that Ladakh had come in contact with Kashmir Valley as early as 250 BC when Asoka is believed to have sent his Buddhist missionaries there. In 1st century AD Kanishka the Kushana king held the fourth Buddhist Council in Kashmir which gave a great impetus to the spread of newly formulated Mahayana Buddhism to other parts of the country. He is reported to have sent some 500 Kashmiri missionaries to Tibet. Fa-Hien, the Chinese traveller while on pilgrimage to India in 399 AD records that Buddhism was in a flourishing state in Ladakh of that time. Moreover the inscription found in Kharoshthi script at Khalaste and existence of a Kushana stupa at Sani (Zanskar valley) testifies to Kushana activity in the region.

Apart from the religion, the Ladakhi script generally known as Bo-ti owes a lot to Kashmiri Pandits or scholars. An incident mentioned by Francke[5] tells us that around 600-650 AD, a student Thon-mi-Sambota along with sixteen other fellow students was sent to Kashmir to learn grammar by King Srong-sang-gampo of Tibet. The interesting conversation between the king and Sambota is quite revealing. The king asked "Have you learnt the letters and the language? Then you may offer praise to Spyan-ras-gzigs (Avalokita). Thereupon Thon-mi wrote down the So-lo-ka (skt. Shloka) and presented it to the king. The king was much pleased and erected the temple of Byin-gyi-khod-mar-rdo, and before the image of Spyan-ras-gzigs these letters (the Shloka) were carved on stone." According to Franke, these form the earliest inscription (in Tibet) and the oldest temple.

Regarding the reign of Lalitaditya Muktapida (700-736 AD), Snellgrove[6] argues that, "Ladakh must surely have been subject to him and thus it is to the 8th and subsequent centuries that we may attribute the Buddhist rock reliefs, which represent the most important traces of pre-Tibetan, i.e., direct Indian Buddhist influence in Ladakh." He cites the examples of Brhad Buddha from Mulbek and rock carvings found at Dras as the source for the figure type used in the area as well as the presence of gigantic images of Buddha in various temples at Ladakh.

King Yeshe-Od (10th-11th century AD), the king of Guge state in Western Tibet (now under Chinese occupation) residing at Tholing seems to have been dissatisfied with the elementary Buddhism practiced in the area. It may be recalled that the Tibetan people were still following the early *Hinayana* type of Buddhism which was quite simple and

which did not call for much visual depictions. The fact that the king decided to send some twenty one students to Kashmir and other parts of India to learn new theories of Buddhism itself shows how important and flourishing the religion must have been in Kashmir. The most prominent among these students was Rinchen-bzang-po (958-1055 AD) who got thoroughly educated in Sanskrit and philosophy. He then tirelessly translated them for the benefit of his people. According to Tucci,[7] Rinchen was assisted by the Kashmiri scholars in translating different sacred texts. His biography reveals the names of sixteen Kashmiri (Pandit) scholars who helped him in his herculean endeavor.

Rinchen's activity did not stop there. He is known to have returned back with thirty two Kashmiri artists and started an ambitious project of constructing some 108 temples. Interestingly, most of these temples fall on the route between Guge to Srinagar. The most notable ones are at Alchi, Sani in Zanskar, Tabo in Spiti, Tholing, Mangnang and Nythang. Prof. Tucci has dealt elaborately with influence of Kashmir art on the development of art in Western Tibet in his monumental work, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*.[8] As stated by him, "Rin c'enbzan po, born in the 10th century in one of the Western Tibet highlands, visited Kashmir several times to study Buddhism and he took seventy-five Kashmiri craftsmen with him to his country. In Tsaparang, Toling, Tabo, in every place of any importance in Western Tibet, the temples founded on Rin c'en bzan po's advice and under the patronage of the kings of Guge bear evident traces of Kashmiri craftsmen's work: bronzes, wooden portals, sculptured with a soft suppleness and a plastic relief proclaim unmistakably the country of their origin..."

Whereas all these examples show that there was a constant connection between Ladakh and Kashmir since antiquity, in recent times the region has been under the cultural sway of Tibet and Ladakh is seen as an outpost of Tibetan culture with no visible ties with Kashmir. While talking about Alchi we have to remember that we are talking of pre-Islamic times when painting formed a major part of one's religious and secular life in Kashmir. *Nilmata Purana*[9] (6th-7th century AD), while prescribing the methods of celebration of Buddha's birthday suggests that the dwelling places of *Sakyas* (viharas) should be white washed and the wall of the *Caityas* – the abodes of the gods – should be decorated with paintings. Moreover dancing and drama are mentioned as forms of celebration. References are also made to paintings painted on the cloth, the wall and the ground (*bhumisobha*). *Viug*-a circular pattern drawn on the ground on which the bridegroom stands before entering the *lagan mandap*, observes Ved Kumari Ghai,[10] is a direct descendant of *bhumisobha*. Damodaragupta in his *Kuttanimata* too refers to courtesans practicing the art of painting to advertise their trade and Somadeva in his *Kathasaritsagara*[11] talks of prevalence of naturalistic looking portrait painting. These examples point towards a rich and well developed painting style in the valley right from 6th-7th century AD. Moreover, Lama Taranath (a 17th century Tibetan Lama), in his *History of Buddhism in India*, talks

about a well developed school of painting flourishing in Kashmir between 6^{th}-10^{th} century AD.

Paintings of Gilgit Manuscript: The Missing Link

Earliest painted Kashmiri Buddhist manuscript was found in Gilgit (presently in Pakistan). Excavated by M.S. Kaul Shastri in 1938, the wooden manuscripts reveal three sets, each consisting of two panels dating back to 9^{th}-10^{th} century AD. The first set incorporates a seated Avalokitesvara and a Dhyani Buddha, the second one depicts Padampani Lokesvara and Amitabha Buddha and the third set portrays worshipping devotees along with three Dhyani Buddhas. The visuals seem to belong to Vairocana cult. The third set where three Dhyani Buddhas are painted gives special prominence to Vairocana Buddha seen in *Dharmachakra Prvartana Mudra* between two other Dhyani Buddhas and is very much similar to the position it has in later murals of Alchi and other sites. (see Illustration 2)

These paintings reveal their affiliation to the classical Indian frescoes and it shows the artists were well aware of the *Shadanga* (six limbs) of Indian painting as enumerated by Vatsayana in *Kamasutra*. The fluidity of line, slanting eyes and the posture of Amitabha Buddha recalls the painting of Padampani at Ajanta cave 2. The beauty of form delineated by a single line shows a masterly hand at work and very well presupposes such forms seen on the murals found at Altheas. The Avalokitesvara figures on the manuscript No.2 seem to represent the Kashmir style (9^{th} century AD) which shows a co-mingling of the Western Indian (Ajanta and Ellora) and Eastern Indian (Pala) elements with the indigenous local idioms.

Kashmir has been an important centre of Buddhism and Buddhist art since early times and many scholars and pilgrims from Kashmir went to Central Asia and China, some of whom translated and interpreted Buddhist texts and helped in the development of Buddhist philosophy in these lands. Likewise, many craftsmen and artists too went to Central Asia from Kashmir to adorn the Buddhist monasteries and chapels with stucco figures and painting, suggests Banerjee.[12] Gilgit manuscripts fill in the gap of our knowledge of Kashmir art of this period since these are the only authentic specimens of Kashmir paintings – hitherto known and it calls for an extremely critical and detailed rereading of the text as well as the paintings.

Vairocana Cult: A Connecting Thread?

Association and transmission of Kashmiri artistic and cultural trends in the area is suggested by several isolated sculptures and inscriptions. Among the most prominent ones is an enormous rock-cut representation of the Bodhisattva Maitreya carved at Mulbek, (see

Illustration 3) an ancient stopping point on what is now the road between Srinagar to Leh. Huntington[13] dates it to 8th-9th century AD, a date suggested by both features of the anatomy and the face of the figure. While on the one hand, the figure betrays its affinity to the Kashmiri convention and is comparable to the image of Chaturvyuha Visnu found from Avantipura (9th century AD), on the other, it almost acts as a prototype for the later Buddha and Bodhisattva figures at Alchi. The image is about 9m high and is one of the few surviving Brhad Buddha sculptures in the Indic sphere. Now here one is reminded of the mention of Brhad Buddha in Rajataringini which states: "Among colossal images, two statues of Buddha were saved through requests adhered by chance to the king at a time when he was free with favours namely the one at Parihaspura by the Singer Kanaka, who was born there and the other by Sramana Kusalasri..." Stein[14] while commenting on these lines states that the great Buddha statue at Parihaspura is certainly the one which King Lalitadiya erected in the Rajavihara. This huge larger than life image of Buddha seems to have been the creation of the Vairocana cult as one can usually spot such images at sites closely associated with this cult. As Snellgrove observes,[15] the cult of Vairocana is typical of Rinchen-bzang-po's times and especially of monasteries associated with him.

Probably this new aspect of Tantric Buddhism took inspiration from tantric pantheon of other religions especially Shaivism. In his recently delivered lecture on *The Shaiva Age: An explanation of the rise and dominance of Tantric Shaivism in the Early Medieval Period*, Alexis Sanderson stressed on the state of transition to Tantric Shaivism from 5th century AD onwards from *Ati Marga* (ascetic form of Shaivism) and it providing the prototype for Tantric Buddhism and Vaisnavism too. Moreover, 9th-10th centuries were also the time of resurgence of Shaivite thought in Kashmir, which must have played an important role in formulation of Tantrayana Buddhism. This contention is strengthened by the fact that the mantra rituals of Tantrayana Buddhism had close parallel to Shaivism and it was around this time that Rinchen-bzang-po visited Kashmir. A visual parallel can be provided by the Mahakala panels painted at both *Du-khang* and *Sum-tsek* at Alchi. In both the panels the deity, a *dharmapala* reflects the features of Siva in a *rudra* form. A sacred serpent round the neck, crown of skulls, a corpse under the feet (probably the *apasmara purusha* symbolizing ignorance) and a skull cup in one hand and chopper in the other completes the iconography of the fierce god. It is interesting to notice the third eye which directly points towards its Shaivite influence. (see Illustration 4)

An interesting example from Shey is a rock carving which shows five standing Dhyani Buddhas with Vairocana occupying the centermost and highest pedestal among them. Snellgrove[16] observes that the central cult at Lamayuru, monastery of Mang-gyu (5 to 6 miles from Alchi) and the one at Tabo in Spiti is of the Central Buddha Vairocana. This cult is represented textually by the Tantras and their commentaries, in which Rinchen-

bzang-po and his collaborators took special interest, have since then formulated the Tantra section of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon.

Lamayuru, as most of the scholars observe, must have been one of the necessary halting places in the former days for the travellers from Kashmir to Ladakh. Local legends at Lamayuru assign it a much later date but looking at the iconographic program in one of the small temples, which is quite similar to Alchi, one can assign it to the times of Rinchen-bzang-po.The main image in the shrine is a well preserved Vairocana, seated on a lion throne, with garuda and a pair of makara forming a canopy to his outer halo. The other four Dhyani Buddhas are seated against the back wall, two on either side. The left wall has mural painting of eleven headed Avalokiteshvara and again a mandala of Vairocana. Similarly the main shrine room at Mang-gyu contains a central image of Vairocana with other four Dhyani Buddhas. On the walls there are mandalas of Vairocana but they seem to have been repainted later as Mang-gyu is a living temple and has been renovated and repainted many times. Nevertheless it is the eleven headed and thousand armed Avalokitesvara and unmistakable central position of the Vairocana image which stylistically and iconographically connects the site to both Lamayuru and Alchi. The interior of the Sum-tsek, the three tiered temple at Alchi is dominated by three gigantic Bodhisattva images representing Avalokitesvara, Maitreya and Manjusri, all three Bodhisattvas of the Vairocana (Sarvavid) cycle.

Alchi: A Stylistic Inquiry

Stylistically Pal[17] divides the paintings at Alchi into three groups. First being the homogeneous style seen at *Du-khang* and *Sum-tsek* as Style I, second a radically different style akin to Pala style (Style II) in Lhakhang Soma and third a mixture of both styles seen at Lotsava Lhakhang (Style III).

The Style I is generally considered to have been derived from Kashmir as the figure types resemble the 9th-10th century bronze images from Kashmir.One of the most interesting painted composition in Style I at *Sum-tsek* shows Tara-Prajnaparamita enshrined in a niche. She is attended by four emanations of herself and is the object of devotion of a noble woman and a priest who are shown just below her. To either side is a depiction of a tall structure regarding which Huntington[18] observes, "Given the archeological remains at Parihaspur and the renown of that site as a Buddhist center, along with the forms depicted in the painting it is likely that these represent Lalitaditya's *catiya* at Parihaspur with its towering form and gigantic metal Buddha image, on the left, and Cankuna's stupa at the right." Such depiction of existing holy shrines as mentioned by Huntington seems to have been a common practice in Buddhist art as seen right from Sunga times upto the depiction of Amaravati stupa on the fragments found from the site. It seems quite likely

that the artists who painted this composition were Kashmiris who might have painted the *viharas* and *caityas* at Parihaspur. (see Illustration 5)

Stylistic analysis of the panel further proves its connection with Kashmir.The shading of the anatomy of the deity is done with meticulous care and such modeling is usually attributed wrongly to the influence of Hellenistic naturalism. The fact that shading as an important constituent of painting is mentioned in *Visnudharmottara Purana*[19] datable to 5th-6th century AD proves that shading was used by artists in Indic sphere. Considering the number of references (almost 21 references) *Nilamata Purana* makes to the former text, it is quite likely that even if the former wasn't written in Kashmir, its contents were well known in Kashmir. The female form can well be compared to the beautiful female figures from Mangnang and Mangyu. The painting virtually shimmers with warmth and color mainly due to the generous use of yellow and green in addition to other colors The almond shaped eyes extending to accentuate their beauty, narrow waist, well defined pectoral muscles and the elaborate head-dress typify the Kashmiri idiom comparable to bronze images. (see Illustrations 6a and 6b)

Here it would be interesting to mention a Kashmiri artist by the name of Bhidaka who has been mentioned in Rinchen-bzang-po's biography to have made a large image of Avalokitesvara and he got the essential brass needed from Kashmir.[20] As Misra in his well researched paper on the position of artists in ancient India writes,[21] "The role of Buddhist monks is found telescoped into that of artist within the framework of the Buddhist Sangha. As for the identity and prominence of artists in the Buddhist system it seems to apply only to those on top of echelon." By this one can deduce that Bhidaka and likes of him were not mere artisans but the master artists who masterminded the entire layout of the temple.

According to Pal,[22] the seated figures depicted at Alchi apart from forms and modeling share one peculiar feature with some Kashmiri Bronzes of 10th-11th century AD (see Illustration 7). Most of them whether at Sumda or at Alchi appear to be perched on their lotuses with their knees extending far beyond the circumference of the flower. This is characteristic feature of several Kashmiri bronzes of the period, the most notable being the Lokesvara dedicated in the reign of Queen Didda of Kashmir (980-1003 AD). Several faint and illegible inscriptions written in the Indian script have been found in many places between the murals at *Sum-tsek*. Believed to have been iconographic notations it does talk of a well developed and well researched style getting transferred to Alchi definitely through the Kashmiri artists.

The entrance to the interior of the assembly hall (*Du-khang*) is decorated with fine examples of wood carvings in the Kashmiri style, observes Huntington,[23] and it can be very well compared to the stone ceiling panel temple at Pandrethan datable to 8th-9th centuries AD which was clearly based on a wooden prototype. Though the former is more

elaborately carved, the style of carving and the treatment of space remains essentially the same especially the torana over the porch of the building bearing rampant lions and other composite animals inhabiting the semi roundels.(see Illustrations 9 and 10)

The paintings that decorate the walls of the interior of the *Du-khang* (Style I) display a well preserved collection of mandalas. Intended as technical meditational devices for the use of the monks, the mandala represents *Sarvadurgatiparisodhana Tantra* cycle in which Vairocana, as Sarvavid (Universal Knowledge) appears in many different manifestations. All forms which include Sarvavid Vairocana as Skamania, Manjusri, Prajnaparamita and others are composed into these huge mandalas, each with thirty seven principal deities and many ancillary figures. Each figure is rendered in exquisite detail and has an elegant, attenuated body with a narrow waist and the impression of musculature in the torso, characteristic of the Kashmiri idiom. Often only about ten centimeters in height, these figures are clearly the work of miniaturist artists. In other mural traditions of South Asia as at Ajanta, painters worked on a larger scale but here the elements of the composition appear to have been literally transferred from a manuscript tradition to the mural context Combined into complex and enormous compositions, however the tiny figures do not seem at all inappropriate on the wall surfaces. The possibility of these being copied from some manuscript paintings or cloth paintings cannot entirely be denied and may be that will explain the small scale and extremely detailed paintings.

Talking of Style I one needs to look at the elaborately painted lower garment of the gigantic stucco Avalokistesvara figure at *Sum-tsek*. It seems that this temple was designed for laity hence the bright coloration and the didactic aspect of paintings here is explained. The various structures depicted on the garment have raised interesting speculations among scholars. Snellgrove[24] observes that, "the whole consists of a series of small scenes depicting palaces and shrines. It is possible that they represent places of pilgrimage in Kashmir which were well known from Hindu/Buddhist period." Moreover Khosa[25] states that the architectural elements depicted are particularly similar to the ones found on relief carvings from Avantisvamin temple near Srinagar. (see Illustration 8)

Around and between these holy structures are depicted a variety of men and gods, viz., shrine attendants, Buddhist monks bringing offerings, musicians and dancers, figures on horseback, vidhyadharas holding garlands etc. The whole feeling that the depictions give is of celebration and joy. Each figure here is delineated with utmost care and gives a sense of volume and soft roundness. The complete layout which cannot be grasped in one glace reminds one of the Wolfflein's idea of Multiplicity (one of the five pairs of opposed visual concepts) where a part of a painting can be viewed as a whole and where each part is a complete painting in itself. The female figure type almost echoes the image of Prajnaparamita mentioned above though the attire is much gaudier and loud.

Interestingly the position posture and attire of the musicians correspond exactly to the instructions given in *Visnudharmottara Purana*.[26] The text too mentions that the pure musical composition practice of singing should be used for worship of divine. That such form of music was popular with Viharas in Kashmir is testified by an incident mentioned by Kalhana in Rajatarangini.[27]

Style II as seen in murals of Lhakhang Soma are more schematic and abstract in their depiction and talk of a radically different style. Nevertheless the shading and modeling seems to derive from Style I but it definitely lacks the grace of earlier representations. Though the date of this structure is not fixed it seems to have been painted after *Sum-tsek* and *Du-khang*. The Pala Influence in these murals is unmistakable and probably has been influenced by the Indian teacher Deepamkar Atisa (AD 958-1055) and his retinue from East India.

An interesting combination of both Style I and Style II can be seen in the murals of Lotsawa Lhakhang. While the figuration follows the Style I convention it lacks the naturalism and three dimensionality of the earlier style. One can compare the mural painting of Rinchen painted in Lotsawa Lhakhang to the one painted at a Chorten near *Sum-tsek* (in Style I).While the former has Indian features and is quite naturalistic, the latter takes recourse in fantastic elements and is more schematic much like Style II paintings. In the former painting form is delineated with soft lines and there is a certain lyrical quality of line while in latter the forms are almost enclosed in geometric designs and are themselves reduced to patterns. The plasticity and the sense of volume which gives a three dimensional quality to the earlier painting is missing in the latter. (see Illustrations 9 and 10)

A usual critique of Kashmiri connection to the murals at Alchi suggests that the hunting scenes depicted on the lower garment of the Bodhisattva and the palace scenes is foreign to Kashmir and seems to have a Persian or Central Asian connection. Here one would like to draw attention to the remains from Harwan where such hunting scenes and secular scenes are seen in abundance. Moreover *Visnudharmottara Purana*[28] clearly mentions that archers and bowmen should be painted with uncovered thighs and wearing boots. It further suggests that men should be painted according to their country, their color, dress and their appearance should be depicted by intelligence. (see Illustration 11)

Conclusion

There is still much to be learned about the artistic movements within the area mentioned and this monumental work needs to be done keeping Kashmir in focus. Huntington[29] goes as far as to suggest that that there is a dire need to evaluate the Yunkang caves in China, the wall paintings from several sites in Inner Asia especially Qizil and Dun huang and

some iconographic manuscripts from Japan with Kashmir in mind as a possible source. Her final verdict that a full understanding of the transmission of Buddhist art through Asia is dependent on developing a greater knowledge of Kashmir art has to be seriously looked into.

Most of the scholars who have worked on the sites mentioned, have sadly lamented the fact that nothing of once highly glorious and magnificent painting style of Kashmir remains today. Many like Snellgrove have shown a keen sense of concern regarding the state of monuments and especially the zealous repainting and renovation taking place in various living temples. The sad fact that the disappearance of these paintings will erase a very important page from the history of Kashmir is a great matter of concern and calls for an urgent documentation of all the neglected sites.

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4. A. Cunningham, *Ladakh*, London, 1854, pp. 317-357.
5. A.H. Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, Vol. II, New Delhi, 1972, pp. 82-83.
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Kanakavarman	*Kamalagupta*	*Gangadhara*
Janardana	*Jnanabhadra*	*Tathagatarakshita*
Devaraka	*Dharmashribhadra*	*Padmakaravarman*
Buddhabhaddra	*Buddhashrihsanti*	*Vijayahsridhara*
Shakyamat	*Shraddhakaravarman*	*Subhashita*
Subhutishribhadra		

8. Guiseppe Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, Vol. I, pp. 272-273.
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14. M.A. Stein, trans. *Kalhana's Rajatarangini: A Chronicle of the Kings of Kasmir*, Vol I, New Delhi, 1989, p. 353 book vii, verse 1097-1098.
15. Snellggrove, *op. cit*, pp. 21-22.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Pratapaditya Pal, *op. cit*, pp 18-19.

18. Susan L. Huntington, *op. cit*, p. 382.
19. *Visnudharmottara Purana*, Trans. By Priyabala Shah, New Delhi, 2002, p. 145 verse 82-83.
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26. *Visnudharmottara Purana*, *op. cit*, pp. 130-138.
27. M.A. Stein, *op. cit*, p. 26 book I verse 140-144.
28. *Visnudharmottara Purana*, *op. cit*, p. 141 verse 34-36 pp 142 verse 49-50
29. Susan L. Huntington, *op. cit*, p. 385



1. Avalokitesvara (Gilgit Manuscript)



2. Vairocana (Gilgit Manuscript)



3. Bodhisattva Maitreya from Mulbek



4. Mahakala panel from Sum Tsek (Alchi)



5. Tara-Prajnaparamita Panel from Sum Tsek



6a. Female figure from Mangnang and Mangy



6b. Female figure from Mangnang and Mangy



7. Kashmiri bronzes of 10th-11th century



8. Painted lower garment of Avalokiteshvara at Sum-Tsek



9. Portrait of Rinchen-bzang-po



10. Lotsawa Portrait of Rinchen-bzang-po



11. A Panel from Harwan, 3rd century AD

CHAPTER 22

Deodar in a Storm: Nadim and the Pantheon

Braj B. Kachru

Dinanath Nadim's (1916-1988) senior and venerable contemporary Zinda Kaul "Masterji" (1884-1965) has been compared with the Amarnath cave of Kashmir: spiritually elevating, distant but uplifting for the believers.[1] This comparison evokes the serenity, aura, and impact one experienced in his presence. And Nadim, Masterji's younger contemporary – almost a generation apart – has been compared with the *deodār* (a species of cedar, *Cedrus deodāra*; Kash. *devador*). The Kashmiris associate the *deodār* with elegance and strength. And to those who are familiar with the environs of Srinagar, it reminds them of the majestic *deodār* pillars in the major mosque in the Valley, dating back to 1401 AD.

In Sanskrit *deva-dārū* has more elevated symbolism, it signifies, "timber of the gods." That Nadim should evoke this comparison from his Kashmiri friends and those who visited him from other parts of India, is not surprising. It is this impact that the Hindi writer Kamleshwar, is perhaps thinking of when he compares Nadim with the *deodār* tree:[2]

> "When I think of Nadim, I am instantly reminded of the *deodār* tree – *deodār* and Nadim – one, a tree and the other, a poet. There is no identity (*ektā*). But I don't know why with the picture of [his] personality, I can't help but imagine the [*deodār*] tree."
> Even without the metaphor of *deodār*, his contemporary Teng, considers Nadim "[...] a very tall Kashmiri poet, both literally and figuratively." Nadim reminds him of yet

another Kashmiri icon, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, since "[b]oth cast their long shadows over the eventful century and even beyond that. Just as Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah emancipated Kashmir from the bounds of feudalism and autocracy. Nadim liberated Kashmiri language from the shackles of a decadent (*sic*) tradition [...] What is more, he is a great Kashmiri as well and like the great Sheikh Abdullah, a standard bearer of Kashmir's distinct identity – cultural as well as political."

These assessments of Kamleshwar and Teng contextualize Nadim and his creativity within the literary renaissance and political turmoil of the Nadim era. Nadim had a presence and he cut a formidable figure: tall, disheveled, and imposing, and while walking, a tendency to stoop. What left an impression on a person were his soft, large and dark, misty eyes. In his personal interaction, there was nothing of a revolutionary about him. He was polite, sociable, compassionate, and extremely sensitive. Whatever revolutionary fire there was in Nadim was not apparent in his unassuming and reassuring – almost shy – personality. The revolutionary fire in him would light up on the platform when Nadim recited his poems of social revolution and change. It was a different Nadim – a *deodār* tree in a storm.

The revolutionary fire was in his pen, which never really went out. This message of revolution made him a pre-eminent representative of the period, and as Lone rightly observes, that made Nadim steal "[...] a march on his predecessors and contemporaries."[3] Lone, a creative writer of distinction in Kashmiri, should know; he has extensively researched the literary history of his language. And now, turning to the impact of Nadim, one might ask: what are the main reasons for his impact on his younger contemporaries?

Ideological Context

Nadim was one of the major messengers for initiating the paradigm change in the Kashmiri language and its literary culture. That he was a prime mover in the shift is not disputed. In his earlier writing the ideological context was provided by the Progressive Writers' Movement. In the 1940s Progressivism (*pragativād*) was a much-debated and much-argued topic in the literary circles in India. The movement came much later to Kashmir, and initially the debate was much muted. It, however, became a primary ideological paradigm after 1947. Nadim began to ask questions which were on the agenda of the Progressive Writers' Movement in India much earlier: the question of social tensions, the exploitation by the Dogra regime and by the powerful *zamindars* (landlords). These ideological ingredients became the soul of the messages.

What appear now like worn-out themes of ideological slogan-mongering and indeed propaganda had a context and social reality in the turmoil of Kashmir of that period. We see that in poems such as *Tsa méri kārvān ban* (You became leader of the caravan), *Nāray*

Inqalāb (The call for revolution), *Me chu Hyond ta Musalmān beyi insān banāvun* (I have to turn Hindus and Muslims again into human beings), *Shervani sund khāb* (The dream of Shervani), *kashiry shury sund tarāna* (The song of a Kashmiri child), *Jangbāz khabardār* (Warmongers beware), *Prutshun chum* (I must ask).

In an interview with Zafar Ahmad,[4] Nadim says, "Yes, intellectually and practically (*vyavhārik*), I have been associated with this [Progressive Writers] movement." And, elaborating on this point, Nadim further observes:

> Actually my poetry has flowed due to that movement. This movement provided stimulus for my poetry. It [the movement] did not encourage only me, but it also encouraged Rahman Rahi, Ghulam Nabi Firaq and many other poets from here. Ali Mohamad Lone, Som Nath Zutshi and Hari Kishen Kaul and others have benefited.

The turning point in Nadim's poetry had actually arrived in the 1940s when Kashmiris were woefully confronted with Pakistan instigated tribal attack on the Valley: In local parlance it is remembered as "the Raid." And recalling "the Raid," Nadim says that one result of it was that all Kashmiris felt "a tension and [an emotional] upsurge (*akh gubhār ... akh grakh*). At that time Nadim began to think afresh and write afresh (*ami vakhta kor me shoruh navi sara sochun ta navi sara lekhun*).[5]

This *navi sara lekhun* (writing in a new vein) and *navi sara sochun* (fresh thinking), for example, led to new genres and new experimentation in Kashmiri. This period also initiated raw nationalism and patriotism drenched in *Kashmiriyat* (Kashmiriness). The *nazms* such as the following were poet's response to the challenges of the time.

(a) *butrāth c ny zardāras kits*
bochi bochi khelé nādāras kits

(b) *tsa chukh kashéri hund javān*
nakhas tse chuy haluk nisān
tse kun vuchān chu drus jahān
tsa gand kamar ta tul kamand
sitara son kar buland
kashéri hund tsa shān ban
nakhas tse chuy haluk nishān
tsa méri kāravān ban
kashéri pāsbān ban

This poem had emotional grip on the psyche of the Kashmiris. The National Conference leaders were providing political slogans and words in abundance, but Nadim provided songs and stirring recitations. It was a mass movement. The rhyme of *tsa chukh kashéri hund javān* is, says Nadim,

"very short and forceful (*bada tshot* and forceful), and for Kashmiris it was also innovative. The content was not new, it was already present in several poems of Abdul Ahad Azad, and in some poems of Ghulam Ahmad Mahjur and Arif, as well. The style was that of Urdu and this was Hafiz's style."[6]

The two poems that attracted the attention of people and that of the Cultural Front toward him are *Tsa chukh kashéri hund javān* and *Grāv* (A complaint). The first poem, Nadim continued, attracted the attention of people towards him *(ta lūkan ti peyi me pyath nazar)*.[7]

These poems were recited by Nadim at Mujahid Manzil,[8] they created, adds Nadim, "a sensation in the Mujahid Manzil".[9] The poem *Irāda* (Determination) was composed just after Nadim joined the Cultural Front. In this poem there are traces of the influence of the Russian Poet V.V. Mayakovsky; Nadim indeed accepts that by the time he wrote this poem he, "had read [Mayakosvsky's] books."[10]

In *Irāda* (Determination) we see Nadim's innovative technique of refreshing imagery and lexical cohesion: The worn-out theme is reconstructed with effective lexical alternation, reduplication, and alliteration. This poem is essentially a propaganda piece, and certainly not one of Nadim's major poems. However, in the genre of patriotic poems in response to the multiple fronts Kashmiris were facing in the past 1940s, *Irāda*, indeed is a memorable poem, and certainly stands out among the poems written on this theme by his contemporaries. The poetic craft of *Irāda* has several levels: The focal lexical items are *vozul* (red) and *vushun* (warm) around which Nadim constructs semantically appropriate lexical sets of nouns and verbs and creates an effect of movement, turmoil and commotion (e.g., *āvlun, janūn, josh, malakh, nār, tufān, vāv, vuzamala*) and verbs connote sacrifice, and martyrdom (e.g., *fidā gatshun, jān dyun, dazun*). In this outward turmoil and commotion, and inward determination of the people nature is an active participant: *vuzamala* (thunder) and *bunyul* (earthquake) indicating restlessness and commotion. The phoneasthetic reduplication enhances this effect (e.g., *vushun vushun, vozul vozul, yi āvlun yi āvlun, tavay tavay*).

In vocabulary, Nadim's strategies are actually very simple: he seems to use words the way clever children – and one might add, mischievous children – use marbles, with intriguing combinations in rather effortless ways. Nadim's contemporary Teng captures this aspect of his creativity succinctly when he recognizes that Nadim's "[...] torrent like flow of refreshing Kashmiri vocabulary is a phenomenon unknown to Kashmiri before his emergence."

The effect of this, wordsmith's dexterity in *Irāda* and such other propaganda poems, has to be contextualized within the historical context of the time, the mode of presentation in the political rallies and the participants in such rallies. It was a socio-politically charged context and Nadim was the people's poet on the stage-performing.

The poem *Ba gyavana az* (I will not sing today) that "changed the trend" and provided a credo for Kashmiri creative writers. It was recited by young Kashmiris in the Valley and its surroundings with infectious enthusiasm: It introduced a refreshing innovative strain to Kashmiri poetry: The same way as Mahjur did earlier, but Nadim had a fresh idiom and a new message. The Nadimian phonaesthetic quality, and his diction were distinct. The process of Kashmirization of the idiom was subtle. The message was that poetic creativity need not be overwhelmed by Persianization and Sanskritization of the language: The switch was to make such resources *desé* in the sense that they are fully assimilated in the language. The medium was contemporary as was the *mantra*. Consider, for example, the use of words such as *jangbāz* (quarrelsome) and *jālsāz* (cunning) in

ba gyavana az
ti kyāzi az chi jangbāz jālsāz hol gandith
kashiri myāni zāg hyath

The use of collocations – the combination of two or more words with specific meanings – exhibit considerable dexterity. Nadim demonstrates his skill in embedding these lexical choices in appropriate contexts most effectively. Consider, for example, *hol gandith* (to gird up one's loins), *zāg hyath* (vigilant watching), and *āyi grāyi* (angling). This poem introduced free verse (*mukt chaëd*) into Kashmiri. Rainā provides the following translation of the poem:

I will not sing today,
I will not sing
of roses and of *bulbuls*
of irises and hyacinths.
I will not sing
Those drunken and ravishing
Dulcet and sleepy-eyed songs.
No more such songs for me!
I will not sing those songs today.
Dust clouds of war have robbed the iris of her hue,
The *bulbul* lies silenced by the thunderous roar of guns,
Chains are all a-jingle in the haunts of hyacinths.
A haze has blinded lightning's eyes,
Hill and mountain lie crouched in fear,
And black death
Holds all cloud tops in its embrace.
I will not sing today
For the wily warmonger lies in ambush for my land.

The poem *Trivanzah* (Fifty-three) presents yet another facet of Nadim: It was actually written in 1952, and thematically it does not refer to the year 1953. It was the time, recalls Nadim, "[...] when Kashmiri leadership also went to some extent, astray. The leaders [of Kashmir] tried to find for themselves treasures, so that they would become independent from everyone, and openly establish their Raj (*khula dula kara han rajah ta tājah*)."[11] There was, however, a group that Nadim believed was against such leaders.

The poem *Trivanzah* (Fifty-three) pioneered dramatic dialogue in Kashmiri. In its technique, in its style, and in what Nadim characterizes, "its *dāstān* (story)," *Trivanzah* was indeed fresh. The poem was inspired by a very touching – but not uncommon – Kashmiri experience. The story that inspired the poem is not very complex; it was a common story of deprivation, exploitation and poverty that is all pervasive and part of almost every Kashmiri's life. The story goes back to the days of food rationing in the Valley in the 1950s, when one collected one's monthly allocation of rice on a 'ration-card' (a card issued to each family by the government to obtain rice – and other items such as salt and sugar – on special price).[12] The ration-card was usually kept with a person who owned and operated a machine (*dãmishén* 'rice machine') for removing husk from the paddy. For a small price, the person would collect the monthly ration, husk it, clean it, and deliver the rice to the family who owned the ration-card. And here is Nadim's summary of his experience.[13]

> We were not as a family able to collect the monthly ration of rice. We used to give the money and get the pounded rice. One day, I went to the "machinewalla" [*mishéni valis*] and there I saw the machine was running. And in front of the machine there was a heap of rice. My ration-card was with him. I said, "*he*,[14] we need one or two *trakh* [approx. 12 lbs.] of rice, so that we can eat." He replied, "Yes",[15] I will give you a *trakh* or so of rice. I cannot give you more, because we have to share it with all [customers]. At that time an old woman walked in, she was accompanied perhaps by her daughter's son. She told him [the *machinewalla*] "Give me also, *haz*,[16] a *seer* or so [2 lbs.]of rice." He replied, "not a *dāny* [a small quantity, weight of about 8 barley-corns] and you talk of a *seer*! You have already taken whatever was your due up to *phāgan* or *chet* [February-March and March-April]. I cannot give you any more." And it was *poh* [December-January].
>
> The little boy who was with the woman, came closer to the heap of rice and picked up a handful of it. The machine man had a *chappal* [sandals] with *mekh* [large nail] in the bottom. And he hit the boy with the chappal on his hand. The boy shrieked. I could not stand it. I told the machine man then, "I will take the rice later. Do give the boy one *manut* [3 lbs.] of rice out of my rice. And I came home and wrote the poem. The poem is *Trivanzah* [Fifty-three].

The poem was a true reflection of its time. In mimeographed and handwritten versions, it was distributed in thousands. Nadim believes that the poem had some impact on the political climate of Kashmir in 1953.[16]

Socio-Political Activism

Nadim's social and political activism during this period is inseparable from his literary creativity; this is especially evident in what may be called his "political" poems. It is difficult to identify any poem from this period, which is devoid of such social and ideological concerns.

I believe there are reasons for this – political, historical, and ideological. The 1947 invasion of Kashmir and its ongoing aftermath continue to take a heavy emotional, psychological, and social toll, let alone what it has done politically and economically to Kashmir and to other parts of India. What happened in October 1947 has touched every Kashmiri in destructive ways – Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims – and no Kashmiri writer has been able to ignore it. The Kashmiris are experiencing, as it were, a psychological roller-coaster – hope and fear, anger and destruction and agony and death.

But above all, what Kashmiris confront is a constant threat and reality of war and insecurity, and we have witnessed and experienced it again and again since 1947. And everybody is paying a price for it – an expectant mother, a waiting beloved, an eager wife awaiting her husband's return – expectation, hope, and love are normal human emotions, signs of life and living. But for most Kashmiris these cherished experiences of life and love have ceased to be so simple. These are delicate dreams, but there is also an ever-present agony of imminent war – the risk of the destruction of one's dreams.

Life's cherished simple things have become difficult due to the dark clouds of political conflict and intrigue. It is here that literature, life, and politics have come together. In his very delicate poem *Me cham āsh pagahach* (I have hope for tomorrow) written in 1952, Nadim has addressed this psychological tension – hope and fear and love and agony.

This poem presents three vignettes of complex interplay of emotions and expectations – a mother's, a beloved's, and a wife's.

But they have one shared concern, and that concern is the refrain of the song:

dapān jang chu vothvun
pagah gotsh na sapdun
They say
War will break out!
But no –
not tomorrow!

The first picture that of an expectant mother, is a dream of a mother's ecstasy and hope of tomorrow:

I hope of tomorrow
When the world will be splendid
When the days will be radiant
When the flowers will blossom
and flower gardens will be blooming
When the earth will be bubbling
and meadows shimmering
when the bosoms will be bursting with fountains of love
When the world will be shining
But then there is agony:
They say
War will break out!
But no –
not tomorrow!

The second picture is of a woman waiting for her lover's arrival – just tomorrow. And she dreams of that tomorrow:

I hope of tomorrow –
my day of rendezvous
When the dusk tenderly arrives
I will wait behind the branches of trees,
in ecstasy with love –
just like Hémāl
And if he is late,
I don't care,
I will be there,
I have a promise to keep.
But then agony returns:
They say
War will break out!
But no –
not tomorrow!

The third picture is of a wife waiting for the return of her labourer husband. During the hard winter in the Valley he has been away, he has gone to the plains to earn some money, with arduous physical labor. This was the fate and practice of poor Kashmiris

during long and oppressive winter months. And now he will return, and she has hope of tomorrow:

The father of my children will arrive!
The moment he calls me
I will rush to greet him –
to press him in my arms
to welcome him in ecstacy –
to place him on fresh green grass.
The father of my children will come
And he will bring gifts for us all
chintz for me
jewelry for our daughter
money for Habéb's wife ...

But then, with this hope the dark thought is not too far away in her mind:

They say
War will break out!
But no –
not tomorrow!

A number of poems composed during this period – Nadim's earlier period of compositions in Kashmiri – are indeed poems of mobilization with intense nationalism and patriotism. These are reminiscent of the *vér kavitā* (the poetry of heroism in early Hindi poetry). If one sees the underlying reasons for this message of *mobilization*, one sees primarily three targets: First, the instigators of the invasion (the Raid) who violated the borders of the Valley: second, the major powers who created the crisis of the Cold War; and the third target was, of course, an ideological one that successfully initiated and implemented the policy of "divide and rule." The instigators of this ideology were the British and a variety of Indian groups. This ideology nourished sectarian loyalties, religious conflicts, divisive politics, that ultimately resulted in the division of the sub-continent.

Nadim has written several poems of mobilization. These are songs for oral recitation, and essentially meant for large audiences. In the 1940s there were indeed abundant opportunities for that – in protest rallies, political meetings, and literary get-togethers. These poems were broadcast over Radio Kashmir and were sung in schools and public functions. The "vigilance groups" would recite them in every *mohallā* of Srinagar. These groups were formed by the National Conference after Maharaja Hari Singh's government finally collapsed, and the Maharaja and his entourage quietly escaped through the dark tunnel of the Banihal pass from the Valley into the safer terrain of Jammu and beyond.

A wit has said that after the runaway Maharaja, the leader of the National Conference, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, picked up the government of the State, as it were, in the Lal Chowk of Srinagar – the prize was waiting for the Sheikh in the Chowk. A network of *halqā* committees were set up by the new-hastily formed-government, who, in turn, took over the nightwatch of the neighborhoods. There was no defense – there was hardly any army; the Valley was in confusion. The volunteers of the *halqā* committees – Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs – would keep a vigil in the neighborhoods, and to pass the time, they would recite the songs of Mahjur and Nadim and others – in Urdu and in Kashmiri.

In this cluster of Nadim's poems, there is a conflation of oral and written modes. A number of these poems have bardic characteristics – a blend of emotionalism, features of mobilization, and entertaining musicality. And Nadim successfully relates these poems to the context of the time when he says:[17]

> In 1947 when India gained independence we [Kashmiris] also became independent. It was then that I felt a transformation within me. The intense resentment (*ākrosh sankul*) and energy within me manifested itself in poetry. The whole fabric of Kashmiri poetry had undergone a drastic change. We were surrounded with slogans. It was not easy for me to escape from these. What I did was to use the slogans in the Kashmiri language in such a way that the 1950s turned out to be a period of fresh awakening and development.

Nadim was indeed right: In those days Kashmir and Kashmiris were "surrounded with slogans," and the poet used this genre of mobilization with splendid emotional effect and appeal. In fact, he recognizes that he "became the recognized spokesperson of the new movement" who "continued to carry the banner of the movement."[18] A number of poems written during this period are essentially "political" poems with a poignant social appeal; the themes have been skillfully localized. The result is that even as "political pieces," they are not mere slogan-mongering. These were essentially the poems of peace.

One has to turn to his much-celebrated poem *Òal hāzni hund vatsun* (Song of the Boatwoman from Lake Dal) to note Nadim's sensitivity and skill in effective use of style shifts. In the long tradition of Kashmiri poetry – both literary and folk poetry – the peasant girl (*grés kūr*) has been portrayed as an incarnation of innocence, as a personification of Hémāl of heaven or a "Caucasian Fairy," or as an arch-representative of love-lorn beauty singing melancholic songs in separation from her beloved. In the Valley, it was the peasant girl to whom the myriad flowers would whisper and the *bulbuls* would sing. It is a poetic world of make-believe, which continued to keep average Kashmiris away from the dismal reality. But Nadim sees yet another facet of the peasant girl in her own *vatsun* – an intense poem.

This poem is an unparalleled revelation of the emotions of a *hāzani* (boatwoman) and shifts in narration and intensity. This is a reality, which had escaped earlier Kashmiri poets. It eluded them because it did not fit into the well-established traditional patterns of Kashmiri poetry – the grid of stifling classical moulds inherited from Sanskrit and Persian. Nadim's portrayal is sensitive, socially relevant, and in its design and patterning, innovative.

After the 1960s, however, there was a gradual ideological shift in Nadim; Arif provides a subtle hint about it when he comments that,[19]

> "Nadim's vigor [*josh*] still in tact. However, on account of his indifferent health and *kavā ke dhére muzahmil hone se*, the religious and spiritual colour has started to appear [in his poetry]."
>
> The above observation of Arif, is conveyed by Teng in different words:[20]
>
> In his view, Nadim began "[...] as a progressive *of sorts*, he [Nadim] finally settled at the creative and macabre detachment which is always the hallmark of a genuine artist." [Emphasis added].

Canonical Shift

Nadim skillfully emancipated the Kashmiri language from morbid dependence on traditional linguistic resources – primarily that of Sanskrit and Persian – that continued to provide models for thematic and stylistic creativity to most of his contemporaries. It is not that Nadim completely put the traditional linguistic resources and devices aside – he simply used these on his own terms.

In his strategies of creativity there is an awareness that over-dependence on such linguistic substrata had divorced the literary language from the people. This dependence on Sanskrit and Persian literary forms had caused acute stylistic and thematic atrophy. Nadim was most comfortable with "vernacular" Kashmiri, the type of language that Sitikantha Acharya, the author of *Mahanaya Prakasha* (Illumination of Highest Attainment or Discipline) has called *sarvagochara deçé bhāsā*: It is this variety of Kashmiri that became Nadim's favorite linguistic resource.[21]

Nadim intuitively realized the fact that the Kashmiri language actually exists in a DIGLOSSIC situation, that functionally the language has two or more varieties. In literature, the formal and colloquial varieties of a language are generally characterized as H(igh) and L(ow), as is the case, for example, in Arabic and Greek, and in India with Bengali, Telugu, and Hindi.

In the case of Kashmiri, the Sanskritized and Persianized varieties have traditionally been used for literary creativity, and in extreme cases these two varieties are not always mutually exclusive. These two varieties have also been termed "Hindu Kashmiri" and "Muslim Kashmiri" (e.g., George Grierson). This distinction, on the basis of religion, can only partially be justified since there is an extensive *variety switch* across religions. We notice such a shift, for example, in Parmananda (1791-1874) and in Mahjur (1885-1952). It is also claimed that there is also the *rekhtā* variety of Kashmiri, which, as the word indicates, is a mixed variety.

Nadim's Impact and the Nadim Era

What then is Nadimian impact on his contemporaries and beyond? The first impact is a broader one and may be characterized as *thematic shift*. In Kashmiri literature, the earlier themes – whether from the Sanskrit or the Persian canons – had been stylized, and as a consequence, had inhibited creativity. These had almost exhausted the language and atrophed creativity. Nadim without a conflict introduced a shift away from such canons – a gradual and effective shift. He slowly opened up the native Kashmiri contexts in local themes and imagery, thus altering the earlier paradigms. The Kashmiri context was not peripheral for Nadim; it was the center of his overall creativity, and he gracefully adapted the language to express that centrality. The Nadimian credo was aptly summarized by him as *chi asi bath nevy nagma nevy, sher nevy*. This very simple credo claims that "our songs are *new*, our dances are *new*, and our verses (*sher*) are new." This was a correct assessment of this period of turmoil. We have yet to attempt a typology of the thematic *newness* of Nadim, or that of the Nadim era.

The second impact is *linguistic shift*. In a nativizing context, Nadim introduced an unparalleled linguistic shift which, for lack of a better word, may be termed a "vernacularization" of the language. In doing so, Nadim again used the strategy of centrality of Kashmiri and neutrality in terms of Persianization and Sanskritization. Nadim, of course, was not the first to adopt this stylistic device; it had been experimented with, for example, by Mahjur and Azad, too. But Nadim excelled in this strategy, and has yet to be surpassed in this.

The third impact is contextualization of his creativity within the milieu of the people, as we have seen in the poem *Dal hāzni hund vatsun* (Song of the Boatwoman from Lake Dal), and in *Trivanzah* (Fifty-three). One again sees this in his operas and in whatever little Nadim wrote in the genre of the short story.

The fourth impact is in Nadim's range in *genre development* in the language. In his creativity Nadim used a wide variety of genres, and in some cases he was actually the initiator of new genres in Kashmiri (e.g., opera, short story). When one thinks of Nadim,

one primarily thinks of him as a poet. Poetry is, however, only one facet of his creativity – though a dominant and major facet. And even within the broad genre of poetry, Nadim was able to use a variety of verse forms, some not attempted earlier in Kashmiri. The range of his verse forms include sonnets, blank verse, free verse, dirges, *harysāth*, *zitni*, *haiku* and *nav nahaj*.

And finally, Nadim was able to cohesively integrate within his creativity the layer upon layer of linguistic and cultural hybridity which is the result of various historical and linguistic factors. At the linguistic level, Nadim demonstrates hybridization in his style choice and style conflation, and bringing together a variety of strands from the folk tradition, from the blend of the Rishi and Sufi traditions, and by focusing on assimilation of various types which have vaguely been characterized as *Kashmiriyat* (Kashmiriness). Nadim's creativity provides fine examples of this linguistic syncretism.

It is by these innovative stylistic devices and syncretism that Nadim opened a wide vista of possibilities in literary creativity. This shift proved emancipating for the language, and he engaged himself in the task with almost messianic spirit. His personality was an added asset. He held the hand of many aspiring writers and set them delicately – and persuasively – on the path of literary creativity in Kashmiri, thus encouraging talented Kashmiris to write in their mother tongue, even when Kashmiri was never their language of education, or of literary or technical discourse.

What made things more complicated for new writers in Kashmiri was that there was often no shared script for writing the language. It was not always an easy task to persuade young Kashmiris to follow the path, because the lure of writing in languages of wider communication was stronger. Nevertheless, Nadim often succeeded.

Albatross Around the Neck

Once Nadim chose Kashmiri – in place of Hindi, Urdu, or English – as the medium of his creativity, he became what is labeled a "minority writer."[22] The choice of a language such as Kashmiri for literary creativity has its own fulfillment, but it has its limitations and frustrations, too. Nadim carried that albatross around his neck with deliberate choice, and with grace and elegance. In India – as elsewhere – it is not easy to be a writer in a minority language, particularly if the language is not taught in an intensive and regular way in the educational curriculum, and has limited, if any, avenues of publication, and practically no critical discourse.

The attitude toward Kashmiri is now only mildly different from Lachman Raina's (d. 1898) attitude as expressed in his *masnavé* in which he says that "Writing verse in Kashmiri is groping in the dark." But then, much later, Masterji in his poem *Pananykath* (About ourselves), sees some hope when he says that "the Kashmiris are to be congratulated.

They were divided and had lost their language, but have now at last luckily found it by great effort."[23]

Kashmiris may have "luckily found" their tongue, but the earlier attitude toward their language actually has not changed. The albatross of a minority language and its "backwardness" yield a variety of consequences: The medium and its message may confine one in highly restricted boundaries of geography and it provides limited and often indifferent readership and resources to a writer. In the case of Kashmiri, the total Kashmiri-using population is around four million. And if one is lucky, and if one's creativity in the language transcends linguistic boundaries, it is essentially through translations or transcreations into a language of wider communication. There is just a handful of Nadim's translations in languages, that cut across linguistic and cultural boundaries, and out of these, only a few translations do any justice to the original text.

That is, of course, not much different from the general picture in other Indian languages. Nadim has yet to find his Edward Fitz Gerald (1809–1883) or his A.K. Ramanujan (1929–1993), who excelled in the craft of translation – the former, from Persian into English, and the latter, from Tamil and Kannada into English. There are a variety of issues which one faces in translating Nadim's poetry, as one does in translating any other writer.

The grid of constraints that the albatross of "a minority language" creates is perhaps one reason why creativity in Kashmiri has not been necessarily the first choice of many Kashmiri writers. A majority of Kashmiri poets have used Kashmiri after writing in another dominant language – on second thought, as it were. The list is indeed long and includes, Zinda Kaul Masterji, Ghulam Ahmad Mahjur, Rahman Rahi, Mirza Arif, Abdul Sattar Aasi, and, of course, Dinanath Nadim. In multilingual societies this situation is again not uncommon. In India and beyond there are creative writers who compose poetry in one language (English) and write prose in another (for example, in Marathi or Kannada). Nadim is conscious of this situation, and rightly argues that,[24] "It is not essential that poetry be composed in one's mother tongue, and the mother tongue be the medium of creativity [...] A poet can compose poems in any language; the point is that one should be competent in that language." In fact, to prove his point, Nadim mentions Ghalib and Iqbal as such *bākamāl* (peerless, exquisite) poets who excelled in their creativity in a language which was not their mother tongue.

Nadim's choice of Kashmiri meant that he faced another limitation – that of choosing for his literary creativity a language that has primarily been transmitted orally. That does not mean that Kashmiri does not have a writing system – it has a multiplicity of writing systems. What makes this more complex is that each writing system is now related to religious and other identities, and invokes ideologically loaded attitudes.

If we exclude the Shārdā script – now almost obsolete – there are still three writing conventions: the Perso-Arabic, the Devanāgari, and the Roman. In Kashmir, the Perso-Arabic script has patronage from the government and is recognized as the official script. Outside Kashmir, only a few can read this script, and a small percentage of Kashmiris have limited familiarity with the Devanāgari and Roman scripts.

The new generation of Kashmiris – in India, Pakistan or elsewhere – is not familiar with any of the three scripts in any serious sense, as far as their use of them for writing Kashmiri is concerned. But they still have some opportunities to listen to Kashmiri poetry and to *ghazals*, *vanvun* and to *lilās* etc., on the radio, on the tapes, and in oral recitation at social and other functions. The input thus is primarily aural.

Whatever little is printed in Kashmiri in Kashmir – in very meager quantities – has negligible circulation and readership. The main avenues for a Kashmiri writer to gain some visibility are Radio Kashmir, and perhaps television and literary and social functions. Altogether, these amount to very restricted avenues. The audience for Kashmiri writers, and their reading public, are primarily in Kashmir and in the regions where there are handful of families of diasporic Kashmiris. Kashmiris who have left Kashmir in earlier waves of migration have very little, if any, competence in or any serious interest in the Kashmiri language, and certainly not in literary Kashmiri.

In Kashmir and beyond, Kashmiri literature has not been taught or studied within any well-motivated or well-structured context of academic discourse, or within the framework of comparative literature. Whatever critical literature is available in the language consists essentially of translations from other languages – English, Urdu, and Hindi – and these are very derivative. There are a handful of insightful and critical studies of individual authors and critical trends, but very few Kashmiris read these. And finally there is, of course, the perennial problem of a lack of good translations of the Kashmiri texts as discussed above, as is the case with those of India's other minority languages – into other Indian or non-Indian languages.

It is within this socio-cultural, literary, and historical context of the Kashmiri language that one must consider the attitude of Kashmiris toward the literary traditions of the language, their identity with the language, and their lack of excitement and enthusiasm toward literary creativity in the language. And given this social, literary, and attitudinal background of the Kashmiris, Nadim's decision – as those of others – to champion the cause of Kashmiri and carry the language's albatross around their necks is laudable. These confines were as real for Nadim as they are now for other Kashmiri writers or writers of other minority languages.

On Transcreating Nadim

The above discussion of Nadim's creativity in Kashmiri and its translations in languages of wider communication (e.g., Hindi, Urdu, English) opens up a Pandora's box of a variety of theoretical, ideological and methodological issues about *transcreating* a text (to use P. Lal's useful term) across languages and cultures. In recent years the provocative issues about the theory of translation have been studied from a variety of insightful perspectives. In cross-linguistic and cross-cultural translations, Nadim's text has to establish *appropriateness* at multiple levels with reference to the 'transcreated' language and the reader. The concept "appropriateness" is rather complex and entails, as Larry Smith (1992) has discussed with reference to world Englishes, *intelligibility*, *comprehensibility*, and *interpretability*.

One sonnet of Nadim's *Zūn* (The Moon) provides an insightful example of the issues related to transcreation or translation. The illustrative specimen is my own translation of the poem.

> The moon rose like a *tsot*
> That day, the *tsot*-like moon ascended behind the hills looking
> wan and worn like a gown of Pompur tweed
> with a tattered collar and loose collar-bands,
> revealing sad scars over her silvery skin.
> She was weary and tired
> and lusterless
> as a counterfeit pallid rupee-coin
> deceitfully given to an unsuspecting woman labourer
> by a wily master.
> The *tsot*-like moon ascended
> and the hills grew hungry.
> The clouds were slowly putting out their cooking fires.
> But the forest nymphs began to kindle their oven fires.
> And steaming rice seemed to shoot up
> over the hill tops.
> And, murmuring hope to my starving belly,
> I gazed and gazed at the promising sky.

The transcreation of this sonnet into another language becomes progressively complex as one confronts *shared*, *partially shared*, or *non-shared* linguistic or socio-cultural canons. The process of redefining and recontextualizing the text becomes more challenging at each stage and with each process.

The genre of sonnet in Kashmiri is patterned on the English sonnet, and it is a recent literary innovation in Kashmiri in which Nadim excelled. The Kashmirization of the sonnet form is obvious in many ways. First, by the use of what may be termed 'culture-dependent' lexis; for example, *tsot* 'Kashmiri nān'; *tani* 'collar-band'; *mozreny* 'a female laborer'; *thekadār* 'contractor'; *gaj* 'a traditional place for cooking'; *vothadān* 'a traditional portable oven for cooking'. Second, by the use of fixed collocations which entail shared knowledge of the local (in this case Kashmiri) context, for example, *pompur pot* 'tweed made in Pompur town'. Third, the use of language-specific fixed collocations and idioms. Consider, for example, the following:

batakuly khasiny
cooked rice trees (plural) to grow
'to have trees resembling cooked rice'
shech bāvany
'to share a secret'
ach phiry phiry vuchun
eyes turn turn to see
'to gaze incessantly'
pana pana gatshun
thread thread to happen
'to fall apart (to be very tired)'
phāka phor
hungry stomach
'to be hungry'

Fourth, the use of phonaesthetic features, for example, as in the following line in Kashmiri.

ropa tani hani hani pana pana gamits pompur pot hish.

There is no way this phonaesthetic effect can be created in a translation.

This much about the segmentation. Now let me explain some other features of the text. The metaphor *zūn* ('the moon') as *tsot* (Kashmiri nān 'bread') is very potent and suggestive. The personification of the moon is consistent with Indian mythology and literary tradition. But, in Nadim, there is a shift in such personification. In this sonnet, the depiction of the moon as *tsot* acquires centrality. It evokes the feelings which are traditionally associated with the moon in Indian literature and folklore. But there the similarity ends. Consider also the range of lexis which occupies the modifier position: 'the collar-bands are loose' is a sign of grief; among the Kashmiri Pandits 'loose collar-bands'

are indicators of mourning. The moon is lusterless 'like a counterfeit pallid rupee-coin' deceitfully passed on with other coins to an unsuspecting woman laborer by a wily contractor. The skyscape further intensifies the suggestion of unsatisfied hunger: the clouds 'put out their cooking fires,' the forest nymphs 'kindle their oven fires' and steaming rice seems to 'shoot up over the hill tops.' And what does the laborer do? 'Murmuring hope to her starving belly, she gazes at the promising sky.'

There are several questions one can ask about the underlying context of the sonnet. How relevant is it to mention that Nadim was an active member of the leftist Progressive Writers Association, and to note that in this sonnet there is a conscious effort to neutralize his style – not to use Persianized or Sanskritized varieties of Kashmiri. And the major point is: how does transcreation in Punjabi, Hindi, Tamil, or, in our specific case in English, recreate the devices and strategies used for 'foregrounding' by Nadim? These questions have faced translators – and creative writers – since the first cross-linguistic translation was attempted, or since literary creativity in the 'other' tongue was attempted.

The English version of Nadim's poem given above illustrates that the transcreation of the text results in marginal crossover – it is mere approximation. The complexities are at the lexical, collocational, syntactic, phonaesthetic, and socio-cultural levels. And this limitation of 'translation' is generally well recognized.

Crossing the Boundaries

One might ask: How does a "minority" language writer cross the linguistic and cultural boundaries to become part of a wider reading public? In India such modest channels include literary awards and other types of recognition – the annual Sahitya Akademi Award, that Nadim received in 1986. This was rather late in his life, since he had not qualified for it earlier, because a collection of his work had not been published until then. One of the conditions of the award is that there be a published work for evaluation. Nadim, therefore, was recognized after most of his contemporaries had received the award. Before the Akademi's recognition, Nadim received in 1971 what was then the Soviet Land Nehru Award. In 1985 he was the recipient of the Kalhana Award.

Among the Pantheon

Nadim ultimately settled on his mother tongue, perhaps well realizing what frustrating constraints his decision would impose on him. In order to appreciate the contribution of a writer in a minority language, particularly one with a limited official status and highly restricted public domains of function, translation (or transcreation) has traditionally been used as one resource to make what are called 'minor' literary cultures known across languages.

Another way is to compare a writer with other writers who are part of the pantheon of writers in Indian or other languages of wider communication. One would say ideally that these should be languages, which have long, evaluative, critical and literary traditions, and a variety of translations into other Indian and non-Indian languages. These comparisons of Nadim with other writers are just indicative of how his contribution has been placed within a larger cross-cultural, cross-literary, and comparative context by scholars from Kashmir and other parts of India. That comparison, then makes Nadim a part of a larger literary context of India, and perhaps beyond.

There are various comparisons of Nadim – both with writers of the languages of the subcontinent and with those of Western languages. In South Asian languages with great literary cultures, Nadim has been compared in Bengali with India's Sukanta Bhattacharya (1926–47) and Bangladesh's Kazi Nazrul Islam (1889-1976), in Urdu with Pakistan's Josh Malihabadi (1898-1982) and Faiz Ahmad Faiz (1911–84), in Telugu with Sri Sri (1910-83), in Malayalam with Vallatol (1878-1958), and in Hindi with Suryakant Tripathi "Nirala" (1896-1961) and Gajanan Madhava Muktibodh (1917-1969). And among writers in Western literatures, he has been compared with Vladimir Vladimirovich Mayakovsky (1893-1930) in Russian and Pablo Neruda (1904–73) in Spanish.

These comparisons are attempts to establish shared identities – at levels of ideology, thematic, and stylistic innovations. Such comparisons with other writers also give us some idea about the names whose memory Nadim evokes in terms of his creativity, his commitment to social change, and his stature as a writer and thinker. Such cross-literary grouping is indeed subjective, but it is not entirely uninsightful. It provides vital indicators for assessing what company Nadim keeps among the pantheon of South Asian and international literatures.

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3. See Ali Mohammad Lone, "Kashmiri Poetry", in *Indian Poetry Today*, III, New Delhi, 1977.
4. See Chamanlal Sapru, *op. cit*, p. 21.
5. Interview with Nadim on 17 July 1974.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. Mujahid Manzil is name of the headquarters of the National Conference.
9. Located in the heart of Srinagar city close to, what used to be the Fateh Kadal (*Kadal* "bridge").
10. Interview with Nadim.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*

14. *He* is an attention-catcher used in conversation in Kashmiri.
15. *Ahan* 'yes' and *sa*, 'a marker of politeness' in Kashmiri.
16. An honorific marker, generally used addressing a Kashmiri Muslim.
17. Sapru, *op. cit*, p. 28.
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20. See Teng in *Ibid*.
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CHAPTER 23

Kashmiri Pandits in Journalism

M.L. Kak

Though during the last over five decades Kashmiri Pandits have excelled in various fields, including medicine, engineering and scientific research, their contribution in the field of journalism, within Jammu and Kashmir and outside the state, has been highly valuable. In fact Kashmiri Pandits were the first to take to journalism. Some pioneers in the field took to journalism as a mission. Kashyap Bandhu and Prem Nath Bazaz edited and owned newspapers for launching a campaign against social evils. Though they had their political ideology, that brought them into conflict with the establishment from time to time, they saw to it that their team of reporters and sub-editors treated facts as sacrosanct. Since early 1930's when Kashmiri Pandits started entering the filed of journalism, it was never an easy going for them. They had to do leg work and would not indulge in yellow journalism to boost circulation of their newspapers. While Kashyap Bandhu edited *Martand*, Kashmiri Pandits saved a handful of rice each day which later was collected after a month, and sold to keep the *Martand* and the organisation alive.

From 1938 onwards Kashmiri Pandit journalists, including editors of weeklies and dailies, used to inform and educate people, who virtually lived in isolation in Kashmir, about political, economic and social events within the State and outside. The scenario in Kashmir during 19930's was totally in contrast with what one has been experiencing since late 1950's when the State registered mushroom growth in daily and weekly newspapers. Over 165 weeklies and dailies in English, Urdu and Hindi are published at present in the State, when in the 1930's Kashmir valley had only one English newspaper *The Kashmir Chronicle* which was edited and published by Gwash Lal Koul and a handful of Urdu

newspapers, including *Vitasta*, *Martand*, *Khidmat* and *Hamdard*. The editors would bank on radio news bulletins for informing readers about national and international events. The rest used to be material related to the political, economic and social situation in the Valley. Between 1932 and 1947, Kashmiri Pandits dominated the main print media.

Kashyap Bandhu, Gwash Lal Koul and Prem Nath Bazaz played a key role in making the print media vibrant which encouraged many a youngsters to take to journalism. While Gwash Lal Koul had a brief stint with the *Martand*, as he later concentrated all his energies towards *Kashmir Chronicle*, which he owned and edited, Kashyap Bandhu had a chequered career in journalism. He went to Lahore where he was influenced by the Arya Samaj reformist movement. In Lahore he was taken on the editorial staff of *Vir Bharat*, edited by Lala Lajpat Rai, where he perfected the art of writing articles and news stories. On his return to Kashmir in early 1930's he alongwith Prem Nath Bazaz formed the Sanatan Dharam Yuvak Sabha. After Bazaz was thrown out of the organisation on the charge of not having pleaded the case of Kashmiri Pandits before the Glancy Commission, Kahsyap Bandhu ran the organisation for 10 years. It was during this period that he edited *Daily Martand* which was the official organ of Kashmiri Pandits. When he found that the then Director Education, K.G. Sayedain had adopted anti-Pandit policies in his department, Kashyap Bandhu along with Prem Nath Kana, another legendary figure in the print media, reserved a column in the *Martand* in which the two devised a novel way of protest against Sayedain by leaving the column blank with simply a black cross in the middle. The daily column ran under the caption of *Director Education Aur Hum*, with a verse *Khamoshi Guftagoo hai bezabaani zaban Meri*. Kashyap Bandhu had a powerful pen and his sense of humour and the art of painting social evils and omissions and commissions in the establishment in satire endeared him to the people. Prem Nath Kana, who took over editorship of the *Martand* years later demonstrated his valour in exposing the wrong policies of the then establishment which brought the newspaper in confrontation with the Government. Soon after joining the National Conference in 1938 Kashyap Bandhu floated an Urdu Weekly *Desh* which continued for several years. After leaving *Martand*, he edited Urdu weekly *Kesari* which was closed after publishing some issues. By temperament, Kashyap Bandhu was a rebel. He revolted against the social evils prevalent among Kashmiri Pandits and as a journalist and editor he launched a vigorous campaign against these evils and waste of money on weddings. Two more Kashmiri Pandits, Jia Lal Kilam, who later became a judge of the High Court, and Amar Nath Kak, a prominent advocate, edited two Urdu weeklies, *Qaumi Dard* and *Vichar*. However, these two weeklies were not as popular as *Desh*, *Kesri*, *Hamdard* and *Martand*. Kashyap Bandhu's two columns *Challan* and *Pagal Ki Diary* attracted state-wide attention. Though a couple of Kashmiri Pandits printed and edited *Bahar-e-Kashmir* in Lahore, Kashyap Bandhu laid the sound foundation for the growth of newspaper industry in Jammu and Kashmir. Kashyap Bandhu, his original name

being Tara Chand, was born in village Geeru in Pulwama district and initially he had worked as a petty revenue official before he left for Lahore where he edited *Arya Gazette*.

During his time Prem Nath Bazaz was another colossus in the print media. He too was a politician with an ideology that was not relished by Kashmiri Pandits. But his political ideology did not affect the quality of news in *Hamdard*, he edited and owned. In fact, *Hamdard*, an Urdu daily, had become an institution for young apprentices, like J.N. Sathu and Nand Lal Watal, to learn the intricacies of Urdu journalism. Bazaz had exhibited the flair for powerful writing and for editing a newspaper during the time he spent in grooming *Hamdard*. He had the energy to go beyond the deadline for the newspaper to cover important news events on a number of occasions. The one was a late public address by Mohammad Ali Jinnah, founder of Pakistan, when he had visited Srinagar in 1944. He had deputed two reporters, one of them being J.N. Sathu, to cover Jinnah's address. The reporters reached office quite late but Bazaz saw to it that *Hamdard* carried the story the next day. And the next day *Hamdard* made a mark because it was the only newspaper in Kashmir which had published a detailed story on Jinnah's speech in Srinagar. During those days there were a number of other Kashmiri Pandits, besides Sathu and Watal, who had been editing or working in some newspapers. Dina Nath Chiken edited *Rahbar* and Shambu Nath Koul edited the *Martand* after Gwash Lal Koul left the newspaper to float his own *Kashmir Chronicle* but the contribution of Kashyap Bandhu and Prem Nath Bazaz in Kashmir's print media has been phenomenal. Following the 1931 incidents, which the National Conference leadership treats as the beginning of the struggle for freedom from the Dogra rule, Maharaja Hari Singh imposed severe restrictions on the freedom of press through promulgation of the Press and Publication Act of 1932. The Government could seize even the printing press where the newspapers carrying anti-establishment stories were published. Had this Act not been promulgated, Kashmir would have registered further growth in the newspaper industry. However, some newspaper owners and editors, including Gwash Lal Koul, started getting their newspapers printed in Lahore which were later distributed in the Kashmir Valley.

Before some Kashmiri Pandits started working for several newspapers, published from outside the Kashmir Valley, Kashyap Bandhu, Prem Nath Bazaz and Gwash Koul used to feed the readers with articles and news stories helping them to get educated and informed about the political, economic and social scenario in and outside the state. Kashyap Bandhu was instrumental in raising the standard of the *Martand* and in this task he was assisted by Sham Lal Gurtoo, Som Nath Ogra, Sat Lal Sadhu, Badri Nath Mattoo and Ram Chand Abhai. In the late 1940's the newspaper owners and editors were missionaries. Both Kashyap Bandhu and Prem Nath Bazaz propagated their respective ideologies and campaigned in favour of social reforms. Later, journalism in Kashmir became more of a profession than a mission. One cannot ignore the services of Nand Lal Watal, who started

his career in the *Hamdard* under the guidance of Prem Nath Bazaz and later edited the *Daily Khidmat* till his migration in 1990, and of Makhan Lal Mahav, who also spent several years in the *Khidmat*. Nand Lal Watal had also edited *Nav Yug* for a brief time. And he remained associated with *Khidmat* since 1948, after *Hamdard* ceased publication. The editorials he would write displayed his intellectual calibre. He was a soft-spoken person who never was seen boasting. He was respected in political and media circles.

Prem Nath Bazaz was the only journalist of his times who later authored several books in English which continue to serve as reference material for research scholars. He was born in July 1905 and remained mentally agile till his end in 1984. When he launched *Hamdard* in 1935, it was a weekly and he later converted it into a daily in 1943. His detention in 1947 and externment in 1950 after his release saw an end to a powerful Urdu daily. In late 1930's one Saligram Koul started an Urdu daily *Vakil*. His son, Pushkar Nath Koul inherited interest in journalism from him and in mid-1980's started editing an English daily *Samachar Post* as well as *Vakil* from Srinagar. After the migration of the Pandits from the Valley in 1990, Pushkar Nath's two sons, Kamlesh and Sushil, settled in Delhi, relaunched the *Vakil* and *Samachar Post* and added to them another publication *Koshur Gazette*.

It was in 1938 that a new chapter in the print media in Kashmir was opened when R.K. Kak joined the print media as a working journalist. During his chequered career he worked for a number of newspapers, including the *Statesman*, *Amrita Bazaar Patrika*, *Hindu*, *Tribune*, *Milap* and *APA*. After his retirement from the *Statesman*, he joined the *Motherland*, an official organ of the Jana Sangh. He worked with the *Motherland* till it ceased publication in 1975 when Mrs. Indira Gandhi imposed emergency. He also worked with the *Indian Express* for several years. R.K. Kak was the first Kashmiri Pandit working journalist who covered the 1947 Pakistani invasion in Jammu and Kashmir. He was known for his impartiality and intellectual honesty. His write-ups were read with interest not only by ordinary readers but also by the authorities in Srinagar and Delhi. He covered important political events right from Jawaharlal Nehru's visit to Kashmir under the Dogra rule. He was the first journalist who through his write-ups, brought into focus China's annexation of Xinjiang and Tibet.

Kak became an inspiration for many young men who joined the newspaper industry. Whenever foreign correspondents or those from Delhi visited Srinagar, they would see to it that before filing their copies they consulted R.K. Kak. His emphasis on facts and his objective reporting usually would bring him in conflict with the successive governments in Kashmir. I vividly remember the day when Bakshi Abdul Rashid, a cousin of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, visited his residence in the Pratap Park area with a bag of money requesting him to stop writing against the government. R.K. Kak lost his cool and after entertaining the junior Bakshi with a cup of tea, sent him away, telling him "I am not a saleable

commodity." He was respected by people, political leaders and bureaucrats of various hues. In fact R.K. Kak dominated the scene for about 20 years till several other Kashmiri Pandits appeared. Interestingly his granddaughter, Aruna Kak also evinced interest in taking to journalism as her career. After obtaining her degree in journalism she had a stint in the UNI in Delhi but after her marriage she had to go to London where she is looking for an opportunity to rejoin the profession.

And since mid-1960's, Srinagar has had a galaxy of eminent Kashmiri Pandit journalists, some among them having been sent by the AIR and news agencies from Delhi. Those who made valuable contribution to the print media during the 1960's and 70's included H.N. Kaul of Press Trust of India (PTI) and Som Nath Dhar of All India Radio (AIR). Before their arrival on the scene, J.N. Zutshi also owned and edited a paper named *Kashmir Sentinel* for a brief time. He had a facile pen, but he joined the Department of Information which he headed for several years. While on the one hand young Kashmiri Pandits, including P.N. Jalali, J.N. Sadhu, J.N. Sathu, Shyam Kaul, O.N. Kaul, B.L. Kak, P.N. Tufchi and O.N. Ganjoo worked for several national and international news agencies and newspapers, some Kashmiri Pandits earned their name in the field of journalism outside the State. O.N. Ganjoo worked with a number of newspapers, including the *Hindu*, *Blitz*, *Free Press Journal* and *Milap*. Before his demise in late 1990's, he was the Special Correspondent of the *Hindu* in Jammu.

For several years J.N. Sadhu worked for the *Indian Express* in Srinagar. He was later transferred to Chandigarh and then to Shimla. He got settled in Shimla where he has been, after retirement from the *Indian Express*, working for several newspapers, including *Deccan Herald*. M.L. Kotru, rose from the ranks in the *Statesman* where he finally retired as Resident Editor. He continues to be a freelance journalist. Till date, Kotru is the only Kashmiri Pandit journalist who has received Magsaysay award for writing on the plight of the downtrodden people of Delhi.

Five other Kashmiri Pandit journalists, A.N. Dar, M.K. Dhar, T.N. Kaul, J.N. Parimoo and R.K. Mattoo have left an indelible impression in media sector. They rose to higher ranks in The *Indian Express*, *Hindustan Times*, *Times of India* and *Indian Express* (Bangalore) respectively. J.N. Parimoo, essentially an expert on reporting on economic issues, worked with the Times of India Group from Washington. Though most of these prominent journalists were not the product of any institute of journalism, they did extremely well by virtue of their sound knowledge of history of the people and places where they worked. The meteoric rise of M.K. Razdan in the PTI is itself a proof of the talent that Kashmiri Pandits have displayed in the field. Whenever Mrs. Indira Gandhi visited a foreign country, Razdan was included in the press corps accompanying her. Among others who have won laurels in the print media are Sameer Kaul, Sumir Kaul and Arun Dhar. Arun

Dhar's niece Aarti Dhar is doing good work as a Special Correspondent in the *Hindu* in Delhi.

Back in Kashmir, veteran journalissts like J.N. Sathu, Shyam Kaul, O.N. Kaul, B.L. Kak, P.N. Jalali, J.N. Raina earned repute as stellar personalities in the field. J.N. Sathu had been externed from the State and in Delhi he was once arrested in connection with a bomb case. The miseries he faced in the jail had their impact on his health till his demise in Jammu at the age of 83. His career in the *Hamdard* ended when the newspaper ceased publication. After his release he started working for newspapers like the *Dawn*, *Civil and Military Gazette* etc. published from Pakistan. When G.M. Sadiq took over as Chief Minister of J&K, Sathu's externment from the State ended in 1964. He returned to Kashmir virtually as a pauper and had to sell his ancestral house in Shopian for a song. He worked for the *Daily Telegraph* (London) with which he remained associated for 30 years. He also worked briefly for the *New York Times*. In mid-1980's, he was appointed by the *Deccan Herald* as its Correspondent. Even after migrating from the Valley, Sathu continued to report for these two newspapers. He and his intimate colleague B.L. Kak, who worked for *Amrit Bazaar Patrika*, then with the *Newstoday*, *Malayam Manorama* and the *Week*, had the distinction of feeding their newspapers with several national and international scoops. The two were the first to report on an agreement between Pakistan and China on building the Karakoram Highway, linking Beijing with Islamabad. They were the first to report on the opening of the Karakoram Highway and Pakistan's preparations for manufacturing a nuclear bomb. B.L. Kak worked for 10 years with the *Daily Excelsior* and before his demise at the age of 63, he was working for Jammu-based *Early Times*.

Though Shyam Kaul spent several years on reporting for the AIR, his write-ups in several newspapers and magazines reflect a high level of knowledge and understanding of the history and politics of the State. At present he is working for the *National Herald* and *Quami Awaaz*. Being well versed in Urdu language and literature is his forte. He has authored a book which is a collection of a series of articles he has written in various newspapers and magazines. Shyam Koul and O.N. Koul had worked in the *Kashmir Post* for a few years. After the publication of the paper was banned, Shyam Koul edited *New Kashmir Post* which too was banned. He later was appointed as PRO in the Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee where he worked for about a year. As an able AIR broadcaster and reporter he found time for writing articles on Kashmir's cultural scenario which were published in several newspapers, including the *Times of India* and *Statesman*.

O.N. Kaul has been essentially an expert on issues related to economy. He earned quite a name while working for the *Economic Times* and *Financial Express*. Later, he also worked for the *Punjab Kesri*, *Excelsior* and *Kashmir Times*, published from Jammu. He excels as an orator. In fact, he has made valuable contribution towards improving the standards of the *Kashmir Times* and *Excelsior*.

P.N. Jalali's contribution to journalism in Kashmir too has been worth appreciation. He had worked for the *Patriot* and the *Link* before he joined the PTI where he retired as its Bureau Chief in Srinagar. He had close association with prominent political leaders and bureaucrats in Kashmir. He played a supervisory role in the IPA and the *Mainstream* in Delhi after he migrated from Srinagar. Another Kashmiri Pandit who earned a name as a journalist has been Mohan Charagi. Charagi has been the Editor of *Quami Awaaz* in Delhi since its edition ceased publication in Srinagar in 1991. His pen is as sharp as an unused blade and his editorials and political analyses are read widely.

M.L. Kak appeared on the print media scene in Jammu and Kashmir in 1977 when he was transferred from Haryana and Himachal where he was a staff correspondent with the *Tribune*. His write-ups on diverse topics evoked interest in several political quarters. His work in the *Tribune* was much appreciated and he was given two extensions when he retired in 2000, it being for the first time in the 100-year history of the *Tribune* that the services of a staff correspondent were retained even after his retirement. His reporting in the *Tribune* on day-to-day events, coupled with analytical news pieces, in the Kashmir Valley between 1989 to 1994 have been appreciated in political and media circles.

Five other Kashmiri Pandits who have made a mark in the print media are Ashok Pahalwan, M.L. Koul, P.N. Raina, T.N. Handoo and Shambu Nath Gorkha. P.N. Raina was the first Kashmiri Pandit to start a news agency under the name of *Kashmir News Service* (KNS). Later he owned and edited an Urdu daily *Madre Kashmir* in which he laid emphasis on investigative and crime reporting. T.N. Handoo worked in a number of newspapers and ultimately joined hands with Maqbool Hussain to run a news agency called NFK which used to feed a number of newspapers in the State with exclusive stories.

Shambo Nath Gorkha had a chequered career while working in several newspapers and before his migration to Jammu he used to edit his own newspaper. Ashok Pahalwan has excelled in the field of objective reporting. He started his career in *Punjab Kesari* and after migration he went to Jaipur where he was appointed a Correspondent by the UPI and the *Voice of America*. Back in Jammu he is at present associated with the *Reuters* and the *Voice of America*. He continues to be a well connected journalist. M.L. Koul has brought credit to the community through his forceful writings in various newspapers. He spent most of his career in the AIR where he retired as Assistant Director News. The plight of Pandits used to haunt him and after migration he launched his own weekly newspaper for a brief time. After his retirement he edited the Jammu based *State Times* for a couple of years. He was a much sought after person for writing commentaries for the AIR and Dordarshan during the session of the State Legislature. Jagan Nath Khaibari and Sham Lal Sharda were two other well known Kashmir Pandit journalists who had no qualms in highlighting the problems of Pandits in Kashmir. Sham Lal edited his paper *Sharda* in Jammu but never lost touch with Kashmir.

After the rise of militancy in Kashmir in 1989-90, scores of Kashmiri youths, some of them the product of the Mass Communication Centre of the Kashmir University, found jobs in various newspapers and news agencies. The advent of electronic media opened new avenues for Kashmiri Pandits. The post-1990 period saw women journalists outnumbering men in the media sector. The first to join the electronic media in Kashmir was Ashwani Kumar who was appointed as a Correspondent by *Aaj Tak* in 1995. Prior to joining the *Aaj Tak*, Ashwani Kumar had worked for the *Tribune*, *Chhoti Duniya*, *AFP* and *Sunday Mail*. The electronic media attracted even another brilliant journalist, Ashok Ogra who had a brief stint as sub-editor with the *Tribune* in Chandigarh. People were surprised when Ogra resigned from the post of Director, Doordarshan, Delhi to join the Discovery Channel. He was the youngest Kashmiri Pandit to hold the post of Director in Doordarshan. Ogra earned quite a good name while working in various capacities with different companies.

The post-migration era saw a number of Kashmiri Pandits doing well in the print and electronic media. In Jammu itself we have besides Ashwani Kumar, Ajay Bachloo, who recently quit *Aaj Tak* to join *Star News*, Sominder Kaul of ANI, Saroj Razdan and Archna Khoshu of the *Indian Express*, Vimal Sumbly of the *Trbune*, Anil Bhat and M.K. Bangroo (both working in PTI), Rajesh Bhat, Avtar Bhat, Sundeep Bhat, B.L. Kaul and King C. Bharti working in Jammu-based newspapers who have been doing a good job. Vijay Malla worked for several years with *Sahara* newspaper and is at present the Director of a well reputed local agency Kashmir Independent Press in Jammu.

A number of Kashmiri Pandit youth have carved out a niche for themselves in the field of journalism. Nidhi Razdan, daughter of M.K. Razdan, General Manager of the PTI, has demonstrated her mettle while working for a TV News channel in Delhi. Smriti Kak, who after quitting the *Tribune* joined the *Hindu*, is a well known journalist in Delhi. Sanjay Kaw joined the *Statesman* in Delhi and after working there for several years shifted to the *Times of India* and is at present holding a senior position in Sahara TV. Rakesh Khar, who was a student in the Department of Mass Communication in Kashmir University, started his career with the Jammu based *Kashmir Times*, before joining a TV news channel in Delhi where he was elevated to head a number of news programmes. Asha Khosa is another woman journalist who has exhibited her talent as a reporter and as a political analyst, first in the *Tribune* and at present in the *Indian Express*. Gargi Kaul is perhaps the first Pandit woman to rise to the rank of a News Editor. She is at present news editor of the *Hindustan Times* in Delhi. Anita Kaul, Nipa Chiragi, Sarla Handoo and many others have been making valuable contribution in the field of print media either as working journalists or as freelance writers.

M.K. Wangoo, Ashok Handoo, Vijay Saqi and Ramesh Bhan have done well in the electronic and print media. While M.K. Wangoo, Ashok Handoo and Vijay Saqi have remained associated with the AIR and Doordarshan, Ramesh Bhan has risen to a senior

position in the UNI in Delhi. Alongwith them Pradeep Magzine has emerged as an expert on sports coverage. A large number of Pandit boys and girls, including Rahul Pandita (*Sunday Express*), Kaveree Bamzai (*India Today* Group), Sandeep Bamzai (Reliance Entertainment), Ajay Kaul (PTI), Aarti Tikoo, Shireen Bhan (CNN-IBN), Smriti Kaul (CSC-India), Sakal Bhat (Doordarshan ANI), Siddharth Zarabi, Rhythma Kaul (*India Today* Group), Amit Bhan (*Pioneer*), Neeraj Santoshi (*Indian Express*), Aditi Bhan (*India Today* Group), Aditi Tandon (*Tribune*) and Pummy Kaul (*Financial Express*) are known figures in the print and electronic media. Death in a road accident put an end to the career of a brilliant journalist, Ashutosh Handoo, who was working in a leading newspaper in Delhi.

J. N. Bumbroo was the first Kashmiri Pandit to rise to the level of news editor in the *Tribune* and now his son, Sanjay Bumbroo is a staff correspondent of the *Tribune* in Amritsar. Ashok Raina, who worked for the *Tribune* and UNI from Anantnag district, is now working for the *Tribune* and *Aaj Tak* in Palampur in Kangra district.

After the 1990 exodus, from the Kashmir valley various organisations of Pandits, based in Jammu and other states, have made a valuable contribution in the field of journalism. A number of magazines, including *Koshur Samachar*, *Kashmir Sentinel*, *Aalav*, *Sundervani*, *Naad*, *Vitasta*, *Harmukh* and *Khirbhawani Times* are being published by people having flair for writing, contributing articles on the history, culture, folklore, language and politics of Kashmir besides human interest topics to these magazines. Credit goes to these magazines for informing and educating people on not only day-to-day problems of the displaced community, but also about the community's rich heritage, culture, traditions and history. Most of the write-ups are from those belonging to the intellectual class like professors, doctors, journalists and historians. The community cannot underestimate the contribution of several writers, who though not journalists, have rendered valuable information on ancient Hindu religious places in Kashmir, lineage of prominent Kashmiri Pandits and important events in the history of the community people. In this context, one cannot but highly appreciate the work of Ramesh Taimeri, B.N. Sharga, T.N. Dhar Kundan, Shiban Kachroo, Jia Lal Handoo, S.N. Bhat and those who regularly contribute to magazines in *Koshur Samachar*, *Kashmir Sentinel*, *Sundervani*, *Aalav* etc. T.N. Dhar Kundan is the founder editor of *Aalav*. He has been contributing articles on diverse topics in various newspapers and magazines.

When Prof. Kulbhushan Warikoo, Head, Central Asian Studies Programme at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi started editing and publishing a quarterly research journal *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* in 1997, he was virtually a pioneer in this field bringing into focus important political, strategic, social and cultural issues pertaining to the entire Himalayan region from Kashmir to Arunachal Pradesh and also in the adjoining areas like Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, Central Asian Republics, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh etc. This journal which has completed 12 years of its successful existence, has been published

quite regularly and in time and has carved a niche in academic circles both at the national and international level.

The main purpose of a newspaper is to inform, educate, guide and entertain people. In this respect the *Kashmir Sentinel*, which is the official organ of Panun Kashmir, a premier organisation of Kashmiri Pandits, does yeomen service. Newspapers run by Kashmiri Pandits and members of the community working for various newspapers and news agencies highlight the problems being faced by the community. However, Pandit working journalists have their limitations as they are not supposed to take sides on various issues, but editors and owners of newspapers like the *Martand*, *Nav Jeevan*, *Vakil* and *Hamdard*, from early 1930's to late 1940's highlighted the plight of the Pandits. A couple of working journalists reporting for newspapers like *Milap* and *Pratap* have also distinguished stories on the kind of the raw deal Pandits were getting by the Government. The Pandit journalists within the Valley were the only people who reported events like Roti agitation which the Pandits had launched for seeking better job avenues. Had not these Pandit journalists and editors shown the courage in reporting events, factually, during the Roti agitation, this important event in the history of Kashmir would have gone unnoticed because the Government had engaged the services of those newspapers, owned by Muslims, for painting the agitation in the black. Pandits in media did their job commendably during the happenings in 1931 or during the 1967 agitation over forcible conversion of the Pandit girl Parmeswari. These events got space even in national and international newspapers and news agencies because of the efforts of the Pandits working in the print media. The fact that Pandits virtually dominated the print media in Kashmir was not only the result of their high literacy rate alone, but also because Muslims would not prefer taking journalism as their profession those days as it was not thought to be lucrative. Whether working for Srinagar based newspapers or in the national newspapers and news agencies, journalists were not well paid. Things have now changed and a large number of Kashmiri Muslim boys and girls have adopted journalism as their profession. Today those from Kashmir who take to journalism as a career find that it is not only lucrative but offers them opportunities to rub shoulders with prominent people in politics, trade and industry.

But, when people like Kashyap Bandhu, Prem Nath Bazaz, Prem Nath Kana, Saligram Kaul, R.K. Kak and others joined the print media, they were motivated by a mission and a purpose. They wanted to serve people by raising issues that concerned them. For whatever reasons, Pandit boys and girls have joined the print or electronic media today, they have proved an asset to their employers.

CHAPTER 24

Kashmiri Pandits in Retrospect and Prospect

K. Warikoo

Kashmiri Pandits – the Indigenous People of Kashmir

The antiquity of Kashmiri Brahmins, alongwith other Hindu castes, is well established by archaeological and historical documentary evidence. Kashmiri Pandits are the precursors of Kashmiri Muslims who now from a majority in the Valley of Kashmir. This historic transformation of far reaching importance took place as a result of introduction of Islam in Kashmir in the fourteenth century. Whereas Kashmiri Pandits are of the same ethnic stock as the Kashmiri Muslims, both sharing their habitat, language, dress, food and other habits, Kashmiri Pandits form a constituent part of the Hindu society of India on the religious plane. However, due to geophysical and eco-cultural uniqueness of the Kashmir Valley, the Kashmiri Pandits have evolved their own traditions, ontology and way of life which is deeply associated rather enmeshed with the mountains and peaks, springs and waterfalls, flora and fauna, shrines and pilgrimages – all that is the essence of Kashmir. Almost every spring (*nag*), mountain peak, cave and hill in Kashmir has been a pilgrim center for Kashmiri Pandits. Similarly, since ancient times the river Jhelum (*Vitasta*) has been an inseparable part of their daily rituals. Since due to the long distance and mountain barriers, Kashmiri Pandits could not visit the *tirthas* (pilgrim centers) in other parts of India in early times, they discovered their own sacred sites in the valley. So the confluence of *Vitasta* (Jhelum) and Sindhu near Shadipur has been treated as Prayag, where ashes

of the dead were immersed. However, some affluent sections of the community did go to Hardwar to perform this rite for their dead kith and kin. Similarly, Gangabal lake at the foothills of Harmukh was a popular place of pilgrimage like Gangotri in Uttarakhand. A stream at Ishbar, near Srinagar is known as Gupt Ganga, where a high centre of Shaivism came up under the guidance of late Swami Lakshman Joo.

The most significant contribution of Kashmiri Pandits has been the exposition of Trika philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism which synthesizes the diverse currents of thought and wisdom found in ancient Indian philosophy. Earlier, Kashmiri Pandit scholars and savants had played a leading role in spreading Buddhism far and wide across the Himalayan frontiers of India in Central Asia, Tibet and China. Similarly Kashmiri Pandits made notable contribution to human civilization in the fields of mysticism, humanism, aesthetics, art and architecture, language and literature, astrology, science and historiography. In this context, mention may be made of the contributions of Abhinavagupta, Anandvarman, Kshemendra, Kallat, Mammat, Rudrat, Jagadar Bhatt, Avtar Bhatt, Kalhana, Jonaraja, Srivara etc. In short, Kashmiri Pandits acted as the vanguard of intellectual, cultural and spiritual movements which lent a distinct identity to this ethno-religious minority of Kashmir.

Kashmiri Pandits inherit a history of tumultuous tragedies during the past seven centuries that is after Islam became a dominant religio-political force in Kashmir. Against immense odds including conversions, killings and exodus of its members, the community of Kashmiri Pandits tenaciously held onto its traditions, culture and beliefs though its energy was drastically clipped. At the same time, they adjusted to changed political situation and not only learnt but also excelled in Persian language and literature. The consequent interaction between Islamic Sufi thought and Kashmir Shaivism led to the creation of a composite culture which was the hallmark of Kashmiri society and culture until recently. Undeterred by adverse vicissitudes of history, Kashmiri Pandits demonstrated

(a) close attachment to ancestral habitat and its natural surroundings in Kashmir, which continues to be the pivot of their day to day life as well as their aspirations;

(b) preservation of their traditions, customs, cultural, spiritual and religious manifestations in the form of shrines, pilgrim centers, springs, peaks, mountains and hillocks, rivers and meadows dotting the length and breadth of Kashmir Valley and which are revered most;

(c) self identification as a distinct ethno-religious and cultural group popularly known as Kashmiri Pandits-distinct from the Muslims of Kashmir. Its distinct character has been maintained by avoiding inter-caste marriages with other groups. The community continues to be identified by others as Kashmiri Pandits.

Forced Displacement: Causes and Consequences

The Kashmiri Pandit community met with a great traumatic experience in the middle of fourteenth century when conversion to Islam took place on a massive scale. The process of conversion was accompanied by the super-imposition of new customs over the ancient indigenous culture leading to its erosion. In a span of about 500 years (1340-1819 AD) this persecuted community was forced to leave its homeland several times. Yet they made it a point to return as soon as there was some let up in religious frenzy.

Notwithstanding the assertion by some recent Muslim writers of Kashmir that "Islam spread in Kashmir not by sword but by *Tableegh*", there is recorded evidence of forcible conversion of Kashmiri Pandits to Islam, destruction of their places of worship and their cultural heritage. Syed Ali Hamadani who entered Kashmir in 1379 AD, and who is believed to have employed relatively peaceful methods to spread his faith, himself enunciates certain principles/terms and conditions for the Muslims ruler in his dealings with the *Zimmis* (non-Muslim subjects). Some of these, as are recorded in his *Zakhirat-ul-Mulk*, are:

(a) Muslim ruler shall not allow fresh construction of temples and shrines for idol worship;
(b) No repairs shall be executed to the existing temples and shrines of non-Muslims;
(c) No difficulty shall be offered to those non-Muslims who of their own choice show their readiness for Islam;
(d) Non-Muslims shall not ride a harnessed horse;
(e) They shall not exhibit idolatrous images;
(f) They shall not dispose of their dead in the neighbourhood of Muslim *maqbaras*, nor weep or wail loudly over their dead.[1]

It was left to Syed Mohammad Hamadani (the son of Syed Ali Hamadani) to carry out the unfinished task of his father, using violent means. The reign of Sultan Sikandar and his successors is known for such atrocities. *Baharistan-i-Shahi*, a contemporaneous history of Kashmir written in 1614 AD by an anonymous author, most probably Syed Ali, gives a glimpse of the methods of such forcible conversion to Islam. It also gives an idea of the struggle of the Kashmir Pandits to hold to their faith, under such terrible circumstances. It says:[2]

> One of the big tasks completed by Malik Kaji Chak, was the massacre of infidels and polytheists of this land. It happened like this. During the government of Malik Musa Raina all the depraved heretics of this land had been converted to Islam. But with the help of some of the chiefs of this land, some of them had reverted to the customs of the infidels and polytheists. These infidels had resumed idolatry. Some of the infidels related

that during the hours of offering prayers and worshipping of idols they would place a copy of the holy Quran under their haunches to make a seat to sit upon. This idol worshipping proceeded even while they sat on the divine book. When the news and details of these doings were brought to Amir Shamsuddin Mohd. Iraqi, he summoned Malik Kaji Chak and ordered him to inflict punishment upon the infidels. Malik Kaji Chak in deference to the wishes of Amir Shamsuddin Iraqi, decided to carryout a wholesale massacre of the infidels. Their massacre was scheduled for the days of approaching *Ashura*. Thus in year 924 AH (1518 AD), during the Asuhra about 7 to 800 infidels were put to death. Those killed were the leading personalities of the community of infidels at that time; men of substance and government functionaries. Each of them wielded influence and sway over a hunded families of other infidels and heretics. Thus the entire community of infidels in Kashmir was coerced into conversion to Islam at the point of sword.

Centuries of religious, political, and economic persecution turned the Kashmiri Pandits into a minority community in their own homeland in Kashmir. As per the 1941 Census, the population of Kashmiri Pandits was 76,868 as against the Muslim population of 17,28,705 in Kashmir.[3] As such they constituted little below 5 per cent of the total population in the Muslim majority area of Kashmir. The 1961 census put the number of Hindus in Kashmir at 89,662, i.e., 4.5 per cent of 19,88,089 being the total population of Kashmir Division. The 1971 census recorded the number of Hindus in Kashmir as 1,11,311, that is 4.57 per cent of the total population of Kashmir Division, which was 24,35,701. The 1981 census put the number of Hindus in Kashmir at 1,23,828 being 3.95 per cent of the total population of Kashmir Division (31,34,905). No census was conducted in J&K State in 1991. Thus the population of Hindus in Kashmir Division registered only 6.75 per cent decadal growth during 1971-81, as against the growth rate of 27.29 per cent for the Kashmir Division as a whole. This insignificant growth of Kashmiri Hindus can be ascribed to migration due to economic and political reasons and also due to their under-enumeration in the Census. When one compares the number of Kashmiri Hindus (1,23,828) as given in the 1981 census of J&K, with about 85,000 Kashmiri Hindu migrant families, one can notice the big gap between the enumerated population of Kashmiri Pandits in the 1981 census and their actual number. At present around 85,000 Kashmiri Pandit families comprising over 400,000 (taking an average of 5 persons per family) are living in displacement in various parts of India after being forced out of their homes and hearths in Kashmir Valley. And only about 8,000 Kashmiri Pandits constituting a meagre 0.01 per cent of the State's population continue to stay in the Valley due to their special circumstances. Most of them have migrated to towns from their original places of habitation in the far off villages. That even these Pandits are suffering due to insecurity, discrimination and lack of employment opportunities, became evident from the protest meeting held in

Srinagar on 4 May 2003 by the representatives of the community members living across the Valley. They demanded of the government to set up clusters of houses at relatively safer places in different districts of the Valley. They also asked for employment opportunities to be provided to the young community members.[4] Their number has declined further as most of them have moved out of the Valley due to continued discrimination in matters of housing, employment and other avenues of living.

Myth vs Reality

While discussing the Kashmiri Pandits in retrospect, one cannot but escape the attention given to the existence of some literate Kashmiri Pandit clerks, munshis and patwaris in the Dogra raj. They have often been portrayed as instruments of exploitation and this has been a common theme of the Kashmiri Muslim political, bureaucratic and intellectual elites in Kashmir to whip up passions against the community by drawing general conclusions out of isolated instances. Sheikh Abdullah quotes Lawrence to describe such Kashmiri Pandits as wielding authority and being responsible for *Begar* (forced labour) in Kashmir during the Dogra period. True that Kashmiri Pandits have looked to clerical jobs as the main means of livelihood, but such jobs were limited to a select few who could make it. Unemployment was quite high among the educated Kashmiri Pandits. According to data collected by the Kashmiri Pandits Social Uplift Association, Srinagar in 1931, the number of educated unemployed Kashmiri Pandits was 777 (including 11 post-graduates, 66 graduates, 92 under-graduates and 608 matriculates). However, given the fact that lesser number of Kashmiri Muslims had attained graduation or post-graduation, most of them were employed. For instance, the number of Muslim teachers in Kashmir province in 1931 was 767 (including 424 Muslim teachers, 127 *Maulvis* employed in *maktabs* and 140 Arabic teachers) as against 500 Kashmiri Hindu teachers. Glancy Commission which was set up in early 1930s by the Maharaja of Kashmir to look into the grievances of Kashmiri Muslims particularly in matters of employment and education, found out that out of 763 gazetted appointments in the State, "Kashmiri Pandits held only 74 including 17 Pandits imported from British India". Even Glancy remarked that "it is certainly not a high proportion."[5] All others living across the length and breadth of the valley were dependent on their small land holdings for subsistence. Here one would quote Walter Lawrence[6] to amplify this statement:

> The vast majority of the Pandits belong to the Karkun clan and have usually made their livelihood in the employment of the State. But as State employment became harder to obtain and the number of the Pandits increased, the Brahmans of Kashmir sought other occupations, and many of them are in business, while others work as cooks, bakers, confectioners and tailors. A Pandit may follow any trade or occupation except

those of the cobbler, potter, corn-frier, porter, boatman, carpenter, mason or fruit seller. In 1894 many Pandits were working as daily labourers on the river embankments. Though many have taken to agriculture and many more are looking to land as a means of employment and subsistence, they would infinitely prefer to spend their lives as clerks in some office. The Pandits of the villages consider it no degradation to follow the plough and to carry manure. However, the future of city Pandits is a matter of some anxiety. They are extremely conservative and short sighted. They are deeply attached to their country, and though Kashmiri Pandits have risen to distinction in India, the large number of unemployed Brahmans of Srinagar will not seek service in the Punjab while it is possible to eke out a bare subsistence in the valley. Every city Pandit is sedulous for the education of his children.

Similarly, there is a belief that Kashmiri Pandits constituted the big landholder class and were as such exploiting the poor peasantry. However, the fact is that as a result of the promulgation of Big Landed Estates Abolition Act on 13 July 1950 by late Sheikh Abdullah, it was found that 27 families (including three religious institutions) owned little more than 518,811 *kanals* of land among themselves in J&K State.[7] Out of this 1,52,924 *kanals* were held in ownership in Kashmir, of which only 23,718 *kanals* were owned by three Kashmiri Pandits – Shyam Sundar Lal Dhar (10,412 *kanals*), Balkak Dhar (5,144 *kanals*) and Raja Upendra Krishan Kaul (8,162 *kanals*).[8] So apart from these 3 Kashmiri Pandit jagirdars, the whole community had a generally lower middle class character, with those in the villages living even more difficult and frugal life. During the nineteenth and most part of the twentieth century, Kashmiri Pandits living in the Valley have lived a life of simplicity, patience and contentment. Pandit Anand Kaul's statement that "the Kashmiri Pandit conceals poverty, trying to make his figure presentable much more than his narrow circumstances permit,"[9] aptly describes the actual situation of Kashmiri Pandits.

As regards the emigree Kashmiri Pandits who had settled mainly in Lahore, Delhi, Awadh, Calcutta and elsewhere in India, these emigrees adapted to their new environs in different ways lending different dimensions to their socio-political outlook. As Henny Sender puts it, "the emigree Kashmiri Pandits lost their sense of identification or unity with those who had remained behind in Kashmir."[10] Whereas "they regarded the Kashmiris of Kashmir as inferior, those in the valley regarded the departed as different." The emigree Kashmiri Pandits, in order to compensate for their "felt status as outsiders", appeared to have over-adapted to their host environment. Thus we find that the Kashmiri Pandits settled in north India particularly Awadh subsumed themselves in the Persianised Urdu culture that surrounded them, feeling more comfortable and at ease in the company of local Muslim nobility and cultural elite. This interaction gave rise to a new socio-political ethos among these Kashmiri Pandits – a mindset which was influenced by the Muslim culture and views. Though this development put these Kashmiri Pandits in a

position to play a positive role as a bridge between different sections of Indian society, it also facilitated the task of Indian Muslim political and intellectual elite not only to safeguard their socio-political situation in the aftermath of partition in India but also to secure a series of affirmative government actions to fortify the religious, cultural, linguistic and political identity of Muslim minority in India.

As against the evolution of this hybrid culture in Awadh, the Kashmiri Pandits living in the Valley and also in adjoining Punjab were closer to roots. It would not be out of place to mention that Shiv Narain Raina Shamim, who was the first Indian lawyer to be named as full Advocate by Arthur Reid, the then Chief Justice in British India and who was later recommended by William Clark for a Rai Bahadurship, was clear and unambiguous when he wrote, "I see Hinduism as part of the Kashmiri tradition and part of their future."[11] Similarly, enlightened and progressive Kashmir Pandits in the Valley started initiating various movements for social reform and educational development. It was in 1905 that with the efforts of Pandit Bala Kaul and some luminaries of Theosophical Society led by Annie Besant, the Hindu College was started in Srinagar, which later came to be known as Sri Pratap college.[12] Another group of Kashmiri Pandits started Women's Welfare Trust in 1926, which run 10 girls schools and 1 Seva Sadan (Adult Women's School).[13] Soon this Trust extended its activities to Jammu and opened a school for Harijan girls there. That more than 1,000 girls were studying in these schools in 1930s, is a landmark achievement in the field of girls' education at that time. More importantly, these Kashmiri Pandits were dictated by high principles of service and patriotism without any consideration of caste or creed. They did not denominate these institutions after their community or creed, unlike other Muslim institutions. In 1928 a movement to combat the social evil of ban on widow remarriage was launched. So much so, widow remarriage was legalised by an amendment in the State law in 1930.[14]

Pandit Kashyap Bandhu was one of the first Kashmiri Pandits to have joined Arya Samaj. He initiated a movement to introduce *saree* among Kashmiri Pandit women to replace the *pheran*. Kashyap Bandhu's writings in his paper *Desh* galvanised the people. Similarly Shridhar Kaul Dullo, then Inspector of Schools in Ladakh did a lot to ameliorate the situation of poor and illiterate Ladakhis. On the political front, the Kashmiri Pandits were clear about the need for association of Kashmiri Muslim political movement against autocracy with the Indian national movement, then led by Congress. Inspite of the sad episode of 13 July 1931 when hundreds of Hindu shops and houses in Maharaj Ganj, Vicharnag and Nowshera were looted leading to death of 3 and injuries of 163 persons, the Kashmiri Pandits started associating themselves with the then Kashmiri Muslim political leaders. Kashyap Bandhu, Prem Nath Bazaz, Jia Lal Kilam, Sham Lal Sharaf, Shambu Nath Peshin alongwith Sardar Budh Singh joined hands with Sheikh Abdullah, Maulana Saeed, G.M. Sadiq, Mirza Afzal Beg and Mian Ahmad Yar to "give a non-communal

direction" to the movement for responsible government in Kashmir, so that it "was not confined to any particular community or section of society."[15] In September 1938 as many as 60 educated and prominent Kashmiri Pandit public workers went to jail and suffered alongside their Muslim counterparts.[16] Prem Nath Bazaz corresponded with Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru informing them about the need to bring Kashmir closer to Indian political movement at that time. Contribution of Kashmiri Pandits to the transformation of Muslim conference into National Conference and subsequent social and political movements including Quit Kashmir agitation, formation of Naya Kashmir programme etc. can not be quantified. In fact, Sheikh Abdullah has acknowledged the role of these Kashmiri Pandits in this struggle.

The destiny of the Kashmiri Pandit indigenous minority of Kashmir took a turn for the worse in the post-1947 era when Kashmir turned into a zone of conflict between India and Pakistan. Whereas the Indian Constitution provided special safeguards in the form of Article 370 to the State of Jammu and Kashmir, it failed to take cognisance of the precarious situation of the ethnic-religious minority in Kashmir as the local administration practised religious majoritarianism in its policies and actions. With the result, the minuscule minority of Kashmiri Pandits became a victim of discrimination in political, economic, educational and cultural spheres in the otherwise secular, democratic and federal political system of post-independent India. The imperative of survival forced the members of this community to search livelihood outside Kashmir. Thus began a fresh erosion of their territorial base in their ancient land of birth. As a community committed to upholding values of culture and civilisation, the Kashmiri Pandits have spent all their energy in attaining education. Kashmiri Pandits focussed all their attention to acquire literacy and higher education to the extent possible within their means, neglecting other avenues and trades.

Terrorism, Extremism and the Exodus (1989-90)

Eruption of armed insurgency and terrorism and rise of militarised form of Islamic fundamentalism in Kashmir since late 1989, came as a disaster for over 400,000 Kashmiri Pandits living in the valley of Kashmir at that time. During the past 20 years or so, the phenomenon of terrorism in Kashmir has manifested in the coercive intimidation of civil population, introduction of radical Islam is society and culture, violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of religion, expression and life, destruction of properties, ethnic-religious cleansing of Hindu minorities, hostage taking, attacks on security forces, mines and bomb blasts, subverting the legitimate civil and political authority in the State and undermining the democratic and pluralistic socio-political order based on the principles of equality and peaceful co-existence. During the first phase of militancy in Kashmir, the

Islamist militant groups strived to "bring structural changes at cultural levels of Kashmir society",[17] seeking to Islamicise the socio-political set-up in the valley. There were open calls for establishment of an Islamic order. Various Islamist groups like *Jamat-i-Islami* and its militant wing *Hizbul Mujahideen*, women's wing *Dukhtaran-i-Millat*, *Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen*, *Allah Tigers*, *Jamiat-ul-Ulemma Islam* etc. proclaimed the objective of their struggle as Islamicisation of socio-political and economic set-up, merger of Kashmir with Pakistan, unification of *Ummah* and establishment of an Islamic Caliphate.[18] The Muslim extremists launched a malicious campaign against the Kashmiri Hindus through periodic write ups in local newspapers and through sermons in mosques. And final ultimatum was given to this minority community through local press asking them to leave the valley within two days or face retribution and death.[19] The liquidation of Kashmiri Pandits, liberal and nationalist intellectuals, social and cultural activists, was described necessary to rid the Valley of its un-Islamic elements.

Throughout the summer of 1989 and after, the Islamic militant organisations used many Urdu newspapers in Kashmir for publishing materials derogatory to the Hindus, their history, customs and traditions, with an object of spreading hatred and disinformation about this ancient indigenous community amongst the common Muslim masses in the valley. Simultaneously, several Kashmiri Pandits were served with notices asking them to leave the Valley. Generally such notices were pasted on the doors or delivered in dark hours of the night. Some shopkeepers and businessmen even received threatening phone calls. This was followed by identifying prominent social and cultural activists, intellectuals, lawyers and young men of the beleaguered Kashmiri Pandit community and preparing the 'hit lists' of such targeted persons, who were denounced and openly threatened. These 'hit lists' were often displayed on the electric poles in the mohallas and squares. Then followed kidnappings, torture and select killings. The first serious blow to the community came with the assassination on 14 September 1989 of Tikka Lal Taploo, a senior advocate of J&K High Court and widely respected social and political activist outside his house. The next day, the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front owned the responsibility of killing Taploo.[20] Taploo's death was followed by the broad day murder of the former Sessions Judge, Nila Kanth Ganjoo in the busy market of Hari Singh High Street in Srinagar on 4 November 1989. Another prominent advocate, social worker, intellectual and journalist of the community, Prem Nath Bhat was shot dead in the heart of Anantang town in south Kashmir on 27 December 1989.

These killings accompanied by the vilification campaign and the circulation of 'hit lists' targetting the prominent Kashmiri Pandit social and cultural workers, intellectuals, government officials and others, wreaked havoc for over 400,000 Kashmiri Pandits living in the Valley at that time. More than one thousand members of this indigenous minority community were brutally murdered, and the rest were forced to leave their hearth and

habitat.[21] Besides, several hundred were reportedly kidnapped and killed. The terrorists resorted to most brutal means of killing by hangings, strangulation, beheadings, skinning alive, sapping of blood and dismemberment of limbs. The forced displacement of almost entire Kashmiri Pandit indigenous minority, who were terrorised, killed and hounded out by the Islamist terrorists, presents a classic case of ethnic-religious cleansing with long term implications for the composite socio-cultural set up and secular polity in Kashmir. These terrorists even resorted to targeted killings of even those few remnants of Kashmiri Pandits who could not move out of the Valley due to various constraints. On 21 March 1997 seven such Kashmiri Pandits were forcibly taken out of their hearths in Sangrampura village of Budgam district and gunned down.[22] Another 23 members of this minuscule minority including 10 men, 9 women and four children were huddled together in dark cold night of 26 January 1998, at Wandhama[23] village in Ganderbal and mowed down by the Islamist terrorists. In February and March 2000, four Kashmiri Pandits, including an eight year old girl, were gunned down in Anantnag district of Kashmir, forcing the remaining 18 families out of their centuries old habitat. In early 2003, 24 members of the community were massacred at Nadimarg in Kashmir valley. All these targeted killings were organised with a clear objective of ensuring that Kashmir valley is cleansed of its non-Muslim minorities and the State is not allowed to restore its secular and composite socio-cultural set up.

As per official statistics released in 1997, 49,760 displaced families from Kashmir are registered as migrants, details of which were given as under:[24]

(a) No. of Registered Migrant Families living in Jammu Division = 28,561 Out of this, 25,215 families are Kashmiri Hindus, 1,803 Sikhs, 1,468 Muslims and 75 others.

(b) No. of Registered Migrant Families residing outside J&K State = 21,199

	19,339
Delhi	115
Himachal Pradesh	523
Haryana	206
Chandigarh	100
Punjab	500
Uttar Pradesh	40
Madhya Pradesh	60
Karnataka	140
Goa	5
Kerala	124
Maharashtra	47
Rajasthan	

Ch. Vidysagar Rao, Minister of State, Home Affairs, Government of India, in his reply to Rajya Sabha unstarred question no. 2274, tabled on 7 August 2002, informed that "56,246 families have migrated from the valley. Of these, 34,305 families are staying in Jammu, 19,338 families in Delhi and 2,603 families in other states. 238 Kashmiri Migrant families are living in 14 camps in Delhi and 4,778 families in 12 camps in Jammu. Others are living under their own arrangements." Since thousands of Kashmiri migrant families were unable to register as migrants due to their immobility, ill health, old age, official apathy and other factors, the Ministry of Home Affairs authorised the Kashmiri Samiti, Delhi to register such families. As per the Kashmiri Samiti records, another 27,229 Kashmiri migrant families were registered with the Samiti as per details below:[25]

Andhra Pradesh	42
Chandigarh	60
Karnataka	15
Madhya Pradesh	78
Maharashtra	121
Punjab	105
West Bengal	31
Jharkhand	22
Rajasthan	80
Uttaranchal	115
Uttar Pradesh	3,920
Haryana	14,000
Jammu	6300

As such, about 85,000 Kashmiri Pandit families comprising this entire community of over 400,000 people have been forced out from their ancient indigenous habitat in Kashmir by terrorists and religious extremists. This minority community is agonising in its twentieth year of displacement, which has resulted in loss of their land, property, homes, educational and employment opportunities, besides leading to break-up of families, social and cultural community ties. Their forced displacement has had devastating consequences on the social, psychological, physical, health and demographic profile of the Kashmiri Pandit community which is on the verge of extinction.

Continued state of homelessness, deprivation and insecurity has pushed this displaced community to a state of continuing chronic stress. This has led to deterioration in the overall physical and mental health of the community. High death and low birth rates, ageing, diseases like diabetes, asthma, high blood pressure, tuberculosis, heart attacks and strokes have overtaken these hapless people. More than 12,000 displaced Kashmiri Pandits have died during their twenty years of displacement due to exposure to hostile environs, snake bites, heat strokes, heart, nervous and other ailments. Dr. Jitendra Singh, a leading physician and diabetologist of Jammu, reported wide prevalence of diabetes mellitus and

high blood pressure amongst the displaced Kashmiri Pandits due to continuing chronic stress. According to him, people at the younger age of 35-40 have got diabetes, which has adversely affected the productive years of life of this community. "My study points to the existence of diabetes in almost each family of displaced Kashmiri Pandits – which is of epidemiological proportions. The displaced community which has survived homelessness, militancy and economic deprivation now faces the threat of biological extinction through the ravages of diabetes with all its accompanying impediments including impotence,"[26] says Dr. Singh. Another study carried out by Neha Kachroo amongst 110 families living in the Government Camp at Muthi, Phase II, Jammu revealed that 60 per cent of the respondents suffered from hypertension, psychological and serious respiratory illness.[27] Five fold increase in the number of tuberculosis cases was reported.[28] Besides, malaria and diarrhoea was found common among the camp inmates due to poor sanitation and drinking water arrangements. Yet another survey of 498 families (2,345 persons) living in Muthi camp I and II, conducted by the NSS Unit of Government MAM Camp College, Jammu (in April 1998) revealed that there were 143 deaths in this camp as against 222 births during exile.[29] Besides, 589 case of serious ailments like asthma, diabetes, depression, neurotic, heart and other diseases were reported amongst this cluster, which is considerably high.[30]

Another major problem encountered by the displaced community has been the loss of their immovable properties, houses, shops, agricultural land, orchards, trees and livestock, which they left behind. More than 30,000 houses belonging to Kashmiri Pandits, hundreds of their business establishments, educational, cultural and religious institutions have been destroyed with the object of decimating all traces of the five thousand years old indigenous minority community. According to Ghulam Mohammad Sofi, a renowned Kashmiri journalist and editor of daily *Srinagar Times* "nearly 32,000 Kashmiri Pandits' houses have been burnt since 1991".[31] Most of the houses, shops, cultural and educational establishments belonging to the displaced Kashmiri Pandits, have been damaged, destroyed, burnt or forcibly occupied by the terrorists with a clear objective of foreclosing all possibilities of the return of these people to their homeland after normalcy. The case of the Kashmiri Pandits who belonged to rural Kashmir and who were dependent for their livelihood on their agricultural land, orchards and cattle is worse. Most of their land stands encroached or occupied and orchards destroyed. According to an estimate prepared by the Kashmiri Migrant Fruit Growers Association, about 9,600 orchardists had approx. 3,600 hectares of orchards of apples, walnuts, almonds etc.[32] Before the exodus, they had in their possession about 5,00,000 apple, 1,30,000 walnut, 25,000 almond and 15,000 other fruit trees, which yielded an annual yield of 15,000 metric tonnes of apples, 3,200 mt. of walnuts, 3,75,000 kgs. of almonds and 30,000 boxes of other fruits, total valuing about 345 million rupees.[33] During the past twenty years of their displacement, they have

not only been incurring a recurring loss of this revenue, most of their orchards stand either destroyed, encroached upon or occupied. Similar has been the case with residential houses and agricultural land, which has been occupied forcibly in the absence of their owners. In most such cases mutation of land and properties has been done fraudulently. All this has led to a process of distress sale of their properties by the Kashmiri Pandit displaced persons. The enactment of the J&K Migrant Immovable property (Preservation, Protection and Restraint on Distress Sales) Act, 1997 (*See Appendix*) has failed to stop fraudulent mutations and distress sale, due to the failure of State administration to protect such properties. So much so, the State government informed the J&K Legislative Assembly that about 635 houses and 2000 kanals of land of migrants were under illegal occupation.[34] The State government informed the National Human Rights Commission that it had completed the job of making inventories of the immovable property left behind in the Kashmir valley by the displaced persons, and that the "total number of structures belonging to the migrants is 16,979 out of which 5,870 structures have been gutted or damaged."[35] Clearly the list prepared by the State government functionaries has been underestimated in a big way to legitimise the fraudulent mutation and forcible occupation of properties owned by the Kashmiri Pandit displaced persons. Ironically no mention has been made of hundreds of thousands of apple, walnut and almond trees besides poplars, willows etc. belonging to Kashmiri Pandits which have been felled and sold as timber during the past ten years. This is despite the admission of the State Forest Minister, Mohammad Ramzan that "an estimated three lakh conifer, deodar and kail trees have been felled and smuggled from the forests in Jammu and Kashmir by the terrorists during this period."[36] Given the magnitude of the problem, it becomes imperative for the National Human Rights Commission, to set up an independent task force to look into the matter and ensure that the wrongs committed are remedied by restoring their lost properties to the hapless displaced persons and securing adequate compensation / relief to them.

A community which once excelled in higher education has been forced to abandon the same in its grim battle for survival. According to a survey conducted by Neha Kachroo among 110 families in the Muthi Camp-II at Jammu, 12.72% of the displaced families were not able to send their children to school due to financial difficulties.[37] These children worked in some local factory or nearby shops. Only 37.83% of the displaced students were going to the Camp school which had inadequate accommodation, furniture, library, laboratory and other facilities.[38] Inordinate delay in the conduct of examinations and then in release of results by the University of Kashmir has been another traumatic experience of the displaced students camped in Jammu.[39] This resulted in loss of at least two years of their academic and professional careers. And to further compound their problems, the Kashmiri Pandit displaced community has been suffering from lack of employment opportunities. According to a survey report, the proportion of

discontinuation of students' education from camp localities was high at school, college and post-graduation/professional level, particularly so in case of girls, in order of ascendance.[40] At the time of their displacement, there were around 26,000 Kashniri Pandit employees out of about 300,000 working with the State, Central government and their undertakings. More than 20,000 have retired, as only about 5, 000 persons remained in State government service in January 2006.[41] As against this, fresh recruitments among the community have been negligible. The State government has made over 100,000 recruitments during the past twenty years, out of which not more than 300 have gone to Kashmiri Pandits. According to a survey of 498 families at Muthi Camp-I and II there was 669 claimants for immediate employment (as on 8 April 1998) out of which 53% were graduates and 40% postgraduates, all in the age group of 20 to 40 years.[42] This policy of denial of employment avenues to the displaced persons has dealt a fatal blow to the very survival of this community.

This displaced community has thus been living with the most traumatic experience of the destruction of its social fabric, economic, familial and environmental relationships and infrastructure. The adverse social, psychological and health consequences suffered by this 5,000 years old ancient community have been enormous, particularly due to loss of their distinct territory, ethno-cultural heritage and identity. This displaced community is a victim of sinister design unleashed by Pak sponsored terrorists to deprive the ancient and indigenous Kashmiri Pandits of their right to the territorial locus in the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir, so that its social and political order is altered to a mono-ethnic Islamist extremist agenda.

A three-member bench of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) while disposing off a set of petitions filed by Kashmiri Pandit displaced persons represented by Panun Kashmir, Kashmiri Samiti etc. in its ruling in mid-1999 likened the crimes against Kashmiri Pandits as "genocide like".[43] It ruled that "the crimes committed against the Kashmiri Pandits are, by any yardstick deserving of the strongest condemnation. And there can be no gainsaying the acute suffering and deprivation caused to the community."[44] Reasoning out that the killings and 'ethnic cleansing' of Kashmiri Pandits in the Valley must be seen in the context of 'deeper intent' to secure the secession of the State, on behalf of the militants, the NHRC urged both the State and central governments to enhance their efforts to provide them with understanding and assistance that they require in these 'difficult days'.[45] Earlier on 12 May 1999, NHRC had constituted a committee comprising the State Ministers for Law, Revenue, Relief and Rehabilitation, Advocate General, Principal Secretary (Planning), Relief Commissioner (Migrants) and only one representative from the Kashmiri displaced persons. That the State government did not even want this lone Migrant Representative to be part of such a Committee, speaks volumes about the intentions of the State government. It is high time that human rights

groups, NGOs, academics, media, literary, social and cultural activists come forward to assist in breaking the vicious cycle of government and public apathy to the human tragedy of immense magnitude that has befallen upon these displaced persons. On their part, the Kashmiri Pandits are reeling under strong sense of alienation, as they are sore about the incomprehension of their problems and the indifference of the State and central government agencies to solve their basic problems of housing, restoration of immovable properties, compensation for lost/destroyed properties, employment, education, health etc.

Kashmiri Pandits present a classic case of deprivation of human rights, oppression, dispossession of their property and territory, marginalisation in cultural, economic and political terms and adverse discrimination on the basis of their distinct ethno-religious identity. Restoration of human rights and homeland with dignity, security, freedom of faith and religion of this displaced minority community, duly safeguarded by appropriate legal, administrative and institutional arrangements and structures, is the sine qua non for peace and security in Kashmir. Here mention may be made of some principles of international humanitarian law and the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement,[46] which are consistent with the domestic law as well, that need to be invoked for securing redressal of some of the immediate problems faced by this community in distress. Principle No. 1 states that the internally displaced persons "shall not be discriminated against in the enjoyment of any rights and freedoms on the ground that they are internally displaced."[47] This principle assumes importance in the case of few hundred Kashmiri migrant teachers employed by Delhi government, which has not only denied them the right of equal work-equal pay, but has consistently refused to make these ad hoc appointees permanent even after putting in more than ten years service, on the plea that they are 'migrants'. This case of blatant discrimination warrants judicial intervention and also redressal by the NHRC.

Another principle No. 20 states that "every human being has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law. To give effect to this right for internally displaced persons, the authorities concerned shall issue to them all documents necessary for the enjoyment and exercise of their legal rights, such as passports, personal identification documents, birth certificates etc. In particular, the authorities shall facilitate the issuance of new documents or the replacement of documents lost in the course of displacement."[48] This case also applies in case of Kashmiri Pandits. Thousands of Kashmiri Pandits do not possess the basic documents such as birth, State Subject, academic qualifications certificates etc. The case of government employees is even worse, as their service records are not accessible to them and all their upgradation/promotion avenues have been blocked. The State and Central Government agencies should issue the requisite Registration/Identity Cards to all such Kashmiri Pandits who or whose ancestors were born in Jammu and Kashmir, indicating their place of origin as Jammu and Kashmir and also giving details of their land holdings.

Principle No.21 states that "No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of property and possessions. The property and possessions of internally displaced persons shall in all circumstances be protected, in particular against pillage, attacks, being destroyed or appropriated. Property and possessions left behind by internally displaced persons should be protected against destruction and arbitrary and illegal appropriation, occupation or use."[49] In view of the circumstances explained above, it becomes imperative to take at least some basic steps to instill confidence in this beleaguered displaced community, on the following lines:

(1) The National Human Rights Commission, which has been hearing the petitions from the displaced persons, should set up an independent Task Force with representatives from the State and central governments, the displaced community, and concerned academic and legal experts to
 (a) prepare a detailed tehsil/district wise inventory of land holdings, houses, shops, business establishments, religious, educational and cultural establishments, orchards, trees and other forms of immovable properties left behind by the displaced Kashmiri Pandits before their exodus, by inviting details from the affected people so that the actual extent of losses can be comprehended.
 (b) to secure adequate relief and compensation in lieu of these losses for the affected persons.

(2) The issue of restitution of houses and landed properties of the Kashmiri Pandit displaced persons, occupied forcibly or acquired through other means including distress sales, be addressed on a priority basis. There is an urgent need to declare null and void the sale deeds, attorneys and mutations of land and property acquired by the local mafia and vested interests from the members of the displaced community, as there are thousands of instances where land and other immoveable property has been either taken away forcibly or sold in distress at very low cost. The State Revenue, Relief and Rehabilitation Minister, Hakim Mohammad Yasin, in a statement admitted that the rehabilitation of over 56,000 Kashmiri Pandit families at their original homes, is a "problem", as "almost 70 per cent immoveable property (houses, land and orchards) have been sold out".[50] Needless to mention that the sale of migrant properties is banned under the State legislations including J&K Migrant Immoveable Property (Preservation, Protection and Restraint on Distress Sales) Act of 1997 (*See Appendix*). This act has failed to protect and prevent distress sales of the Kashmiri Pandit properties in the Valley.

(3) Of late the State government has been claiming to have prepared plans for the return of displaced Kashmri Pandits to the Valley of Kashmir by offering them some accommodation in a few clusters. Before any such plans are made, the State government needs to allot permanent accommodation to over 8,000 Kashmiri Pandits who have stayed back in the Valley through the period of terrorist violence,

and who are badly in need of safer places to live in. They have been staying in rented accommodation, as they have migrated to the city from their original places of residence in far off villages due to insecurity. That the State government is only interested in securing some political mileage and publicity, becomes obvious from its action of evicting the few Kashmiri Pandit families from the government owned Budshah Flats in Srinagar, which served as their safe shelter in Kashmir for about 15 years of turmoil.[51] The State government is, therefore, well advised to take care of these Pandit families by allotting them the limited number of flats that have been/are being constructed at places like Mattan, Tulamulla and Sheikhpora. This will be the first concrete step to address the problem in a genuine and effective manner.

(4) The State and central governments need to institute affirmative action programmes by granting the displaced Kashmiri Pandits some privileges as have been granted to the underprivileged sections of Indian society such as Scheduled Castes/Tribes, Other Backward Classes etc. This step can help the younger generation in securing employment and admissions to various professional, higher educational institutions thereby saving the future generation of the community from getting into oblivion.

(5) Jurisdiction of the National Minority Commission should be extended to J&K State to look into the problems of non-Muslim minorities in that State. It may be recalled that in 1982, the J&K State legislature had passed a bill to set up the State Minority Commission, only to be repealed subsequently by the G.M. Shah government. The former Chairman of National Commission for Minorities, Dr. Tahir Mahmood too made a strong recommendation to the State Chief Minister, asking the State government to take legislative and executive measures for according minority status to Hindus living in the State.[52] But no action has been taken so far in this regard.

(6) Central government and voluntary agencies need to come forward to assist the Kashmiri Pandit displaced persons and their institutions by providing liberal assistance in terms of land, finance and infrastructure to build educational and cultural institutions and also small hospitals / clinics to cater to the specific needs of this population, in the same manner as is being done through Development Finance Corporations exclusively set up for the welfare of minorities and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

(7) The State government needs to work out legal and institutional modalities for safeguarding and promoting the ethno-cultural and religious rights of these displaced persons, by instituting a Kashmir Hindu Religious Shrines Board to take care of all their shrines, as is being admirably done by the Mata Vaishno Devi and Shri Amar Nath Shrine Boards.

(8) Whereas the process of political alienation of Kashmiri Pandits had developed even before their exodus from the Valley, it became total after their migration. The community of over 400,000 members remains unrepresented in the democratic set up both within and outside the State. It may be mentioned that 3 to 4 Kashmiri Pandits were members of Jammu and Kashmir Legislature till 1970s. It is high time that their civil and political rights are protected and promoted by giving adequate representation to the Kashmiri Pandits in various legislative, government and public bodies both at the State and central levels.

(9) Even after two decades have lapsed, hardly any terrorist involved in killings, kidnappings, torture and numerous cases of arson and murder involving Kashmiri Pandits has been convicted. Even trials of the accused, where chargesheets have been filed, have not been initiated. Both the law and order machinery and judiciary have failed to discharge their responsibilities and there has been conviction only in handful of cases.[53] In its first ever report compiled in early 2008, the Jammu and Kashmir Police admitted that 209 Kashmiri Pandits were killed by militants since 1989 and that "chargesheets have been filed in 24 cases only, while killers in 115 cases remain unidentified or untraced."[54] As such, judicial and criminal proceedings related to terrorist atrocities and crimes heaped on the Kashmiri Pandits need to be initiated by setting up Fast Track Special Courts to ensure expeditious trial, prosecution and punishment of terrorists. So far, no action has been taken on this account.

The failure of Indian State and farce of criminal justice system in India came to fore in September 2007, when Farooq Ahmed Dar alias Bitta Karate (one of the top leaders of JKLF), who killed 30 Kashmiri Pandits in 1990 and who was largely responsible for creating fear psychosis among the beleaguered community, walked free out of court. Bemoaning his release, a Kashmiri Muslim journalist wrote, "Bitta Karate eluded justice because the criminal justice system in Jammu and Kashmir is quite dead. The State's failure to bring to justice a mass murderer and ethnic cleanser like him should not be viewed in narrow terms. It is high time the security agencies are reminded of the fundamental duty of their craft – to secure convictions."[55]

(10) The society and media need to galvanise their support to the law and order machinery and create a social milieu in which such terrorist and extremist activities are not tolerated. Concerted steps need to be taken towards inter-faith dialogue and reconciliation between the Kashmiri Muslims and Pandits, at various levels.

(11) At the international level, the UN bodies and states should come out openly against terrorist activities without being dictated by their own political priorities and compulsions.

(12) Indian experience of relief and rehabilitation of Tibetan refugees, who got ample land, educational, business and employment opportunities in Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Darjeeling and Karnataka, besides exclusive educational/cultural institutions to preserve and promote Buddhist/Tibetan culture, is a model that needs to be replicated by the Government of India in order to save the Kashmiri Pandit minority community and its rich cultural heritage from going into oblivion.

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APPENDIX

THE JAMMU & KASHMIR GOVERNMENT GAZETTE

Vol.110] Jammu, Mon., the 2nd June, 97/12th Jyai, 1919 No.97

PART III

Laws, Regulations and Rules Passed thereunder.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR,

CIVIL SECRETARIAT – LAW DEPARTMENT

Srinagar, the 2nd June, 1997

The following Act as passed by the Jammu and Kashmir State Legislature received the assent of the Governor on 30th May, 1997 and is hereby published for general information:

THE JAMMU AND KASHMIR MIGRANT IMMOVABLE PROPERTY (PRESERVATION, PROTECTION AND RESTRAINT ON DISTRESS SALES) ACT, 1997.

ACT NO.XVI OF 1997.

[30th May, 1997]

An Act to provide for the preservation, protection and restraint on distress sales of the immovable property of the migrants.

Be it enacted by the Jammu and Kashmir State Legislature in the Forty-eighth Year of the Republic of India as follows:-

1. Short title extent and commencement. –

(1) This Act may be called the Jammu and Kashmir Migrant Immovable Property (Preservation, Protection and Restraint on Distress Sales) Act, 1997.

(2) It extends to the whole of the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

(3) It shall come into force at once.

2. Definitions. – In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,-

(a) "alienation" means sale, gift, mortgage with possession or exchange but shall not include gift in favour of an heir;

(b) "competent authority" means the District Magistrate of the area and includes such other officer of the area as the Government may appoint for an area;

(c) "Government" means the Government of the State of Jammu and Kashmir;

(d) "immovable property" shall also Include tenancy rights or interest created under any law for the time being in force;

(e) "Migrant" means any person who has migrated from Kashmir Valley after 1st

November, 1989 and is registered as such with the Relief Commissioner and includes a person who has not been so registered on the ground of his being in service of the Government in any moving office, or having left the Valley in pursuit of occupation or vocation or otherwise, and is possessed of immovable property in the Valley, but is unable to ordinarily reside there due to the disturbed conditions;

(f) "prescribed" means prescribed by the rules made under this Act;

(g) "Prescribed authority" means the authority competent to grant permission under section 3;

(h) "Relief Commissioner" means any authority appointed as such by the Government or any other State or Central Government' for purposes of registration of the migrants;

(i) "unauthorized occupant" means' any person who has encroached upon or taken possession of any immovable property of a migrant without his written consent and authority of Law.

3. **Restriction on alienation of immovable property.**– Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in any other law for the time being in force:

(a) alienation of immovable property, of a migrant by act of parties or decree or order of a court or of a revenue officer except under such conditions as may be prescribed and with previous permission of Revenue and Relief Minister, or such officer as may be authorized by him in this behalf, is forbidden: Provided that no such permission shall be necessary in case of a mortgage without possession of such immovable property in favour of an institution mentioned in section 4-A of the Jammu and Kashmir Alienation of Land Act, Samvat 1995 and transfer of the said immovable property in favour of Government of Jammu and Kashmir: Provided further that the permission to alienate shall be deemed to have been granted, if an application seeking permission for alienation of such property is not decided by the prescribed authority within fifteen days from the date of receipt of such application: Provided also that the enquiry for the purposes of the grant of permission by the prescribed authority shall be limited to the question of sale being not distress;

(b) any alienation of immovable property on or after the commencement of this Act, in contravention to the provisions thereof, shall be null and void and immovable property, so alienated shall, after such enquiry as may be prescribed, vest in its owner; and

(c) no document purporting to alienate such immovable property in contravention of the provisions of this section shall be admitted to registration.

4. **Custody of immovable property.** – (1) Within 30 days from the commencement of this Act, the District Magistrate shall take over the possession of immovable property, belonging to Migrants, falling within his territorial jurisdiction and shall, on the expiry of said period of 30 days, be deemed to have the custody of such immovable property.

(2) The District Magistrate shall take all such steps as may be necessary for preservation and protection of such property:

Provided that possession of such property shall not be handed over to anyone save with the express consent of the migrant in writing.

5. **Eviction of unauthorized occupants.** – If any unauthorized occupant of any migrant property refuses or fails on demand to surrender possession thereof to the competent authority, such authority may use such force as is necessary for taking possession of such property and may for this purpose after giving reasonable warning and facility to any women not appearing in public to withdraw, remove or break open any lock, bolt or any door or do any other Act, necessary for the said purpose.

6. **Implementation of the provisions of this Act.** –

(1) The competent authority may take or cause to be taken such steps and use or cause to be used such force as may be, in its opinion necessary for eviction from or delivery of possession of immovable property under this Act.

(2) At any time after the commencement of this Act, it shall be lawful for a competent authority to enter upon any immovable property of any migrant and make or cause to be made any survey including measurement and do any other act which may be necessary for carrying out the purposes of this Act:

Provided that no such surveyor measurement shall be done otherwise than on a written complaint by a migrant.

7. **Appeal.** – (1) Any person aggrieved of an order passed under this Act, may file an appeal before the Financial Commissioner, Revenue:

Provided that no such appeal shall be entertained against –

(a) an-interlocutory order;

(b) an order of eviction unless possession of the property is surrendered to the competent authority;

(c) an order of payment of compensation determined under this Act unless the amount of compensation is deposited with the appellate authority.

(2) The period of limitation for filing of an appeal under sub-section (1) shall be fifteen days from the date of order appealed against.

1. Bar of jurisdiction of Civil Court: Notwithstanding anything contained in any law for the time being in force-

(a) no civil court shall have jurisdiction to settle, decide or deal with any question

or to determine any matter arising under this Act or the rules made thereunder; and

(b) no order of any officer or authority passed under this Act or the rules made hereunder shall be called in question in any civil court.

2. *Indemnity*: No suit or any other legal proceedings shall lie against any officer or authority in respect of anything which is in good faith done or intended to be done under this Act.
3. *Power to issue instructions*: The Revenue Minister may, from time to time, issue such instructions not inconsistent with this Act, or the rules made thereunder as he may consider necessary for the purposes of implementing the provisions of this Act or the rules made thereunder.
4. *Act to override other laws*: The provisions of this Act, the rules made and the instructions issued thereunder shall have effect notwithstanding anything contained in any other law or custom or usage or in any contract, express or implied, or in any instrument inconsistent with the provisions of this Act.
5. *Declaration of restrictions imposed to be reasonable*: For the removal of doubts, it is hereby declared that restrictions imposed by section 3 on the rights conferred by clause (1) of Article 19 of the Constitution of India, as applicable to the State, shall be deemed to be reasonable restriction.
6. *Compensation*: Any person who is an unauthorized occupant or recipient of any usufruct of any immovable property of the migrant shall pay to the migrant such compensation for the period of unauthorized occupation and in such manner as may be determined by the District Magistrate:
7. *Power to make rules*: The Government may make rules for carrying out the purposes of this Act.

(Sd.)................................
Deputy Legal Remembrance
Law Department

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A folio of Bhagvad Gita
in Sharada script



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